THE FUNDAMENTALS OF HINDUISM

A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY

By

SATISCHANDRA CHATTERJEE, M.A., PH. D.

LECTURER IN PHILOSOPHY, CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY

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PREFACE

India won her independence after a long period of hard struggle and intense suffering. Since then there has been a general awakening of interest in Indian thought and culture in this country and abroad. Hinduism contains the most important elements of Indian culture. But it has been, and still now is, as much appreciated by some as depreciated by others.

The object of this book is to present the fundamental principles and doctrines of the Hindu religion with its philosophical background. This background is partly implicit in the religion itself, but more fully and explicitly stated in the different systems of Hindu philosophy. Those who are not conversant with Hindu philosophy are, therefore, apt to misunderstand and misrepresent Hindu religion. This is just what one finds to be the case with many unenlightened followers of the faith, as well as some enlightened but unsympathetic critics in India and abroad. It is, therefore, felt that there is need for a philosophical study of Hinduism as a religion. The present work is an attempt to remove this long-felt need.

In the course of interpretation an attempt has been made to orient the fundamental elements of the Hindu religion in the light of Western thought and for the benefit of Western readers. This accounts for most of the critical discussions which could otherwise have been dispensed with.

The problem of social reform in Hinduism is urgent. Attempt has been made to throw some light on this problem of reconstruction of the Hindu society to suit modern conditions. It is hoped that the book will serve the needs of university students as well as of general readers interested in Hindu philosophy and religion.

The author is grateful to Professor Haridas Bhattacharyya, M.A., B.L., Darśana-sāgara, who has kindly read the typescript and made valuable suggestions. He is also thankful to Svāmī Nityasvarūpānanda, Secretary, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, for his kind help in the preparation of the typescript and his valuable suggestions for some improvements.

Note to Readers

English equivalents of original Sanskrit words used in this book have been generally given. Reference to the Index will explain some other Sanskrit words which occur in the book.

For correct pronunciation, readers should note that the following scheme has been adopted for representing Sanskrit sounds in English.

अ=অ=a,	क्=ক্=k,	ढ्=ঢ্=ḍh,	र्=র্=r,
आ=আ=ā,	ख्=খ্=kh,	ण्=ণ্=ṇ,	ल्=ল্=l,
इ=ই=i,	ग्=গ্=g,	त्=ত্=t,	व्=ব্=v,
ई=ঈ=ī,	घ्=ঘ্=gh,	थ्=থ্=th,	श्=শ্=ś,
उ=উ=u,	ङ्=ঙ্=ṅ,	द्=দ্=d,	ष्=ষ্=ṣ,
ऊ=ঊ=ū,	च्=চ্=c,	ध्=ধ্=dh,	स्=স্=s,
ऋ=ঋ=ṛ,	छ्=ছ্=ch,	न्=ন্=n,	ह्=হ্=h,
ए=এ=e,	ज्=জ্=j,	प्=প্=p,	क्ष्=ক্ষ্=kṣ,
ऐ=ঐ=ai,	झ्=ঝ্=jh,	फ्=ফ্=ph,	ङ्क्=ঙ্ক্=ṅk,
ओ=ও=o,	ञ्=ঞ্=ñ,	ब्=ব্=b,	ङ्ग्=ঙ্গ্=ṅg,
औ=ঔ=au.	ट्=ট্=ṭ,	भ्=ভ্=bh,	ज्ञ्=জ্ঞ্=jñ,
	ठ्=ঠ্=ṭh,	म्=ম্=m,	ं=ং=ṁ,
	ड्=ড্=ḍ,	य्=য্=y,	ः=ঃ=ḥ.

CHAPTER I

A DEFINITION OF HINDUISM

1. *The Meaning and the Sources of Hinduism*

Hinduism may be taken to mean either the Hindu way of thinking or the Hindu way of life. The Hindu way of life is popularly called Hindu Dharma. But Hinduism really stands for both and should, therefore, be taken to mean both the Hindu view and way of life. As such, Hinduism is identical with the Hindu religion. The word *Dharma* derivatively means that which supports or upholds the world of living beings.[1] Dharma is neither a system of abstract ideas and beliefs having no necessary connection with life, nor a set of rules to be followed blindly in daily life without any understanding of their basic principles. Rather, it is the conscious adoption of the principles of a perfect life in the world. Hence although Hindu Dharma may popularly mean obedience to and observance of the Hindu code of life, yet its original and real import covers both the Hindu religious ideas and the Hindu way of life. So by Hinduism we here mean Hindu Dharma in the sense of Hindu religion.

Every religion has a twofold aspect. It includes certain ideas and beliefs on the one hand, and certain emotions and activities on the other. "In the soul of Religion," says Dr. James Martineau,[2] "the apprehension of truth and the enthusiasm of devotion

[1] "Dhāraṇāddharmamityāhurdharmo dhārayate prajāḥ" etc., *Mahābhārata*, Karṇaparva, 69. 58 (Poona Ed.).

[2] Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, 2nd Ed., Vol. I, p. 1.

inseparably blend". What is true of religion as such is true of Hinduism as well. In it we find both a theory of reality and a practical code of life. So we seem to be justified in taking Hinduism to mean the Hindu religion.

To define Hinduism is a delicate and difficult task. This is so, not because it is a very abstract and mystic religion, but because it is very wide and, in a sense, universal in its scope. It is not based on the message of any single prophet or incarnation of God, nor on the teachings of any one saint, sage or religious reformer. On the other hand, Hinduism is founded on the varied religious and moral experiences and teachings of many ancient, medieval and modern Indian sages and seers, saints and devotees—Munis, Ṛṣis, Ācāryas and Bhaktas. Historically speaking, it has its bases in (1) the Śruti consisting of the four Vedas, including the Upaniṣads, (2) the Smṛtis or Dharmaśāstras like those of Manu, Yājñavalkya, Śaṅkha, Likhita, Parāśara and others, (3) the Purāṇas and the Upa-purāṇas numbering 36 in all, (4) the Itihāsas like the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* including the *Bhagavad-gīta*,[1] (5) the six Vedāṅgas including the *Śrauta*, *Gṛhya*, and *Dharma Sūtras*, and the six Vedopāṅgas or the six systems of Hindu philosophy with their texts and numerous commentaries and compendiums.[2]

It is quite natural that a religion, of which the

[1] The Purāṇas and the Itihāsas taken together, are sometimes said to constitute the fifth Veda. *Cf. Chāndogya, Up.*, 7. 1. 2; *Viṣṇu-bhāgavata*, 1. 4. 20.

[2] It should be noted here that the heterodox or non-Vedic systems of religious philosophy like Buddhism in its numerous branches and Jainism (both Śvetāmbara and Digambara) have a

source is so complex and multiple, should itself be complex and manifold in character. It does not represent a single type of religious experience, nor does it recommend the same path for all to attain the goal of religion. On the other hand, it comprises the entire body of religious experiences of different sages and saints at different times and from different standpoints. These different types of religious experience have been interwoven into one comprehensive system of religious theory and life, which suits the needs of different men or of the same men at different stages of their life. Hinduism as a religion is thus a synthesis of different types of religious experience, none of which is allowed to contradict or cancel the others, but all of which are adjusted as inter-related parts of one whole and as progressive steps in the religious life of man. Each type of religious experience, however, may be, and has actually been, taken as the foundation of one kind of religion. This is the reason which explains the existence of so many apparently different religions within the fold of Hinduism. Since, however, the basic religious experiences, on which they are founded, are not contradictory but complementary, there need be no conflict among them. As a matter of fact, we see how different religious sects like the Śaiva, the Śakta and the Vaiṣṇava live and prosper on the common ground of Hinduism. Having regard to this cardinal fact of

large number of ideas and beliefs, especially ethical ones, in common with Hindu philosophy and religion, and may thus be regarded as kindred systems. If we take the word 'Hindu' in the geographical sense to mean 'Indian', then Buddhism, Jainism and Śikhism also may be included within Hinduism. This is what has actually been done by some writers on Hinduism.

the different types of religious experience growing and manifesting themselves in the form of different religions, we may, therefore, best describe Hinduism as a synthesis of many religions, or a universal religion.

2. *The central Teaching of the Vedas and the Bhagavad-gītā*

Let us now try to define Hinduism. This can best be done in the light of the central teaching of the Vedas. Of the different bases of Hinduism, mentioned above, the Vedas constitute the primary ground and the final authority in the Hindu religion. The central and cardinal faith of the Vedic sages may thus be expected to be present in a greater or lesser degree in all the ramifications of Hinduism, and accepted as their common character.. Of course, we do not dispute the possibility of pre-Vedic cultures and non-Aryan influences entering into and somewhat modifying the original character of the Aryan religion. But this is still a matter of historical research. So far as historical evidences go, we can say that the Hindu religion is based mainly on the Vedas and that the different religions and philosophical schools which have evolved on the soil of India are more or less indebted to the Vedas and participate in the spiritual outlook of life which has characterised Vedic culture from time immemorial. Now the cardinal faith that enlivens and permeates the Vedas is 'the belief in one universal Spirit who is self-luminous and manifests himself as the earth, the sky and the heaven, and dwells in every heart as its inner ruler and guide'. Along with this belief, the Vedas enjoin 'meditation on the Supreme Being and regular prayer to Him to guide our intellect along

the path of virtue and righteousness'. Just this is the central creed and code of Hinduism. That this is so becomes clear when we remember that it is a religion which is primarily based on the Vedas and that the Vedas are summed up in Gāyatrī. For the view that the Gāyatrī mantra sums up the teachings of the Vedas, we have the authority of the Vedas themselves and the entire body of Sanskrit literature. What the Gāyatrī mantra means we have just stated here as the central creed and code of Hinduism. The Gāyatrī in a single mantra combines a creed and a prayer.[1]

Next in importance to the Vedas comes the *Bhagavad-gītā* as an exegesis of Hinduism. The *Gītā* is a religio-philosophical treatise in which we have the quintessence of the Vedic religion and Upaniṣadic philosophy. It is said to be the supreme knowledge of absolute reality and to be the embodiment of the spirit of the Vedas.[2] It is also described as the cream of the philosophy of the Upaniṣads as that was skimmed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa and delivered to Arjuna for the good of mankind.[3] Of all the Hindu scriptures, the *Bhagavad-gītā* is the most widely read among the Hindus, and for many of them it is the

[1] The mantra reads as: "Bhūrbhuvaḥ svaḥ tatsaviturvareṇyaṁ bhargo devasya dhīmahi, dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt". It may be translated (to give the full sense) thus: "We meditate on the most resplendent and adorable light of the self-luminous Spirit who dwells in the heart as its inner ruler and manifests Himself as the earth, the sky and the Heaven; may He guide our thoughts and actions along the right paths!" *Cf. Sukla Yajurveda*, Ch. 36, verse 3.

[2] "Gītā me paramā vidyā brahmarūpā na saṁśayaḥ . . . .
Vedatrayī parānandā tattvārtha-jñānasaṁyutā".
Gītāmāhātmya, 8-9.

[3] "Sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopālanandanaḥ
Pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīrbhoktā dugdhaṁ gītāmṛtaṁ mahat".
Gītā-dhyāna, 4.

solace of life and of death. It is of universal appeal, and is read by seekers after truth and lovers of God in all parts of the world. The central teaching of the *Gitā* is that God is the supreme self (paramātmā) whose lower nature is revealed as the physical world including mind, intellect and the ego, and whose higher nature constitutes the world of individual selves (jīvas), but who transcends both these worlds and is, therefore, called the supreme person (puruṣottama) in the Vedas and the Purāṇas.[1] It teaches also that the supreme self can be realised and thereby perfect and eternal life attained by man by following any one of the four main paths of religion, viz. Dhyāna or concentration, Karma or work, Bhakti or devotion and Jñāna or philosophic knowledge. These four paths are in no way exclusive of one another or of other recognised paths. They are the four broad pathways of religion which are complementary to one another and are inclusive of other different paths followed by the different religious sects of Hinduism. All of them lead to the same goal of religion, namely, God or life eternal, and a man may adopt and follow one or the other, according to his attainments, temperament and character. The continuity of religious theory and culture is maintained from the Vedas to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, although we find in the latter a purer and finer form of the religion than is found in the former. This is just the reason why the religion of the *Gitā* appeals readily to the modern Hindu and equally satisfies his emotional, intellectual and volitional nature, and also suits the different temperaments which go by these names.

[1] *Cf. Gītā*, 7. 4-5; 15. 16-18.

In the light of what we have said about the Vedas and the *Bhagavad-gītā,* we seem to be justified in saying that the *Gāyatrī* and the *Gītā* constitute the fundamental grounds of Hinduism. Hinduism as a religion should be founded on these bedrocks and a definition of Hinduism should be given in terms of the one and elaborated in the light of the other. It is in accordance with this principle that we propose to define Hinduism as follows.

3. *Hinduism—A Monistic Religion*

Hinduism is a monistic religion which, on its theoretical side, believes in one ultimate spiritual reality or existence which reveals itself as this and many other worlds, and is present everywhere in the universe and beyond it, and which dwells in every living being as its inmost self, its wisest ruler and supreme lord. This ultimate spiritual reality is the Supreme God in Hinduism. It also believes that though God is one, He has various manifestations in many gods, any one of which may be worshipped as a form of the Supreme Deity. The divergent schools of Hinduism like Śaivism, Śāktaism, Vaiṣṇavism and the like are at bottom based on a philosophy of one Supreme God, nay more, of one all-inclusive reality. Hinduism may thus be regarded as a unique form of monotheism which believes rather in the unity of the gods in God, than the denial of gods for God. On the practical side, Hinduism enjoins meditation on and devotion to the supreme Being throughout one's life, so that one may realise the highest goal of life, *i.e.* God. While God is one, there are, according to Hinduism, many different

ways of reaching Him, just as there are many paths that lead to the same destination. Among the many ways or paths of religion, it emphasises four, namely, yoga or mental concentration for self-realisation, karma or the performance of religious and moral duties in a disinterested spirit, bhakti or devotion to and worship of God in pure body and mind, and Jñāna or a reflective and critical knowledge of reality which through moral purification and continued meditation leads to the realisation of the ultimate reality or God. The other paths of religion which might have been laid down and followed by the different sects of Hinduism may be comprehended within these four, so far as they are genuine and authoritative and are sanctioned by the Hindu scriptures. So also, the apparently divergent schools of Hindu religion may be shown to bear the common stamp of a monistic faith in one existence or one Being as present in everything. Hinduism is the sublime religious faith which finds one in all and all in one, and recognises the unity of all genuine religious faiths as being so many paths leading to the same goal, *i.e.* God.[1]

[1] *Cf.* "Ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁstathaiva bhajāmyaham Mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ".' *Gītā*, 4. 11. *Cf.* also 7. 21, 9. 23. *Vide* also *Śiva-Mahimnaḥ Stotra*, 7, in which it is clearly stated that 'although men follow different religious paths according to their different tastes, because they judge each one to be as good as the rest, yet all of them have the same God as their final goal, just as all rivers have the same ocean as their final destination'. The same idea is neatly expressed in an oft-quoted Sanskrit verse which means: "Just as rain-water falling from the sky flows into the ocean, so does salutation to all gods reach Keśava, the Supreme".

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF GOD

1. *The Problem of God in Philosophy and Religion*

In this chapter we propose to consider the nature of God as conceived in Hinduism. As we have already stated, Hinduism as a religion is not merely a code of life or a set of rules which one should follow blindly in life without any understanding of their basic principles and rational grounds. It is a code of life which represents the practical aspect of a comprehensive philosophy of life. In fact, the Hindu code of life never stands divorced from the Hindu philosophy. Rather, it is a code for a religious mode of life which is organically related to a theory of reality. There is a definite theory of reality including God, man and the world which supplies the rational ground and justification for the religious mode of life. Hence, if by Hinduism we mean the Hindu code of life, we should bear in mind that it arises out of a definite philosophy of life and cannot be properly understood apart from the latter. In truth, Hinduism as a religion is both a view and a way of life, which are related as the theoretical and the practical side of the same spiritual life. In it we find both a philosophy of the world and a practical code of life which inseparably blend to constitute the soul of a great religion.

The nature of God is a problem for both philosophy and religion. While philosophy is concerned with the rational knowledge of God, religion has for its end. the realisation or direct experience of God. In the one we seek to arrive at an intellectual understanding of God's nature, in the other we strive to attain an immediate experience of His existence and

nature. In religion man wants to have a *beatific vision* of God, while in philosophy he tries to form a rational *idea* or consistent conception of God's being and nature. Now any attempt to know the existence of a thing must be ultimately based on certain experiences of it. To know the existence of light or colour, for example, we require a visual experience of it. We cannot form an idea of what light or colour is, unless we have the requisite experiences with regard to it. What is true of our knowledge of ordinary things like light and colour is all the more true with regard to our knowledge of ultimate realities like self and God. Hence a philosophical knowledge of God must be based on certain religious experiences of God's being and nature. But if the knowledge of God is ultimately based on certain experiences of Him, it should be consolidated and perfected through a rational criticism of such experiences. A rational study of religious experiences is necessary to make our knowledge of God reasonable and acceptable to all rational minds. In the absence of a philosophical criticism, divergent religious experiences fail to give us a harmonious knowledge about God and His relation to man and the world. Hence any rational knowledge about the nature of God should be based on a philosophical criticism of religious experiences. It should combine philosophical knowledge with religious insight and make them corrective of each other. In the Hindu religion we find this much needed synthesis of religious or spiritual experiences with reflective or philosophical study. Hence we expect to get a fairly comprehensive and satisfactory account of the nature of God in Hinduism as a religion.

2. *Hinduism—Monistic or Polytheistic*

We may get some light on the Hindu idea of God if we consider carefully the nature of Hinduism as a religion. As we have explained it in the first chapter, Hinduism is a religion which is based primarily on the Vedas including the Upaniṣads. It is, therefore, also called the Vaidika religion. The other sources of Hinduism, such as the Smṛtis or Dharmaśāstras, Purāṇas, Itihāsas, the six philosophical systems, etc., are more or less dependent on the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, and aim at explaining, justifying and popularising the teachings of the latter.[1] Then, we have it on the authority of the Vedas and the entire body of Sanskrit literature that the Gāyatrī sums up the teachings of the Vedas and is also their mother, i.e. inspiring spirit.[2] The Gāyatrī may, therefore, be regarded as the key to a right understanding of the nature of the Vaidika or the Hindu religion. We are further confirmed in this belief by the fact that the initiation of a Hindu into the religious life takes place, if at all, through the impartation of the Gāyatrī mantra in some form or other. If, therefore, it is inculcated in the Vedas and the Upaniṣads and also in the Gāyatrī, which is their essence, that there is one universal being who is self-manifest and manifests himself as this and many other worlds, we are to say that the religion which is centered in this faith is monistic in character. Hinduism, then, is a monistic faith which believes in one Spiritual Reality or Existence as manifesting Itself in many forms like

[1] *Cf. Manu-saṁhitā,* 2. 6, 10; *Yajñāvalkya-saṁhitā,* 1. 3.
[2] *Atharva-veda,* 19. 71. 1.

the earth, the heavens, planets, gods and goddesses, living and non-living objects.

It may be said here that since the Vedas believe in many gods and goddesses and enjoin various methods of pleasing them, we must characterise the Vedic religion, not as monistic, but as polytheistic. But here we should remember two things. First, it should be noted that each of the many gods and goddesses who are praised by the Vedic sages, is raised to the status of the Supreme Lord of all at the time he or she is honoured and worshipped.[1] In view of this fact, Max Müller characterised the Vedic faith not as polytheism, but as henotheism. Sometimes it is also called monolatry which means the worship of one only out of several gods whose existence is recognised. But neither of the terms is quite suited to describe the Vedic faith correctly. Another fact, which is more important than the first, is that in the Vedas we come across passages where it is explicitly stated that the different gods and goddesses are only manifestations of one underlying reality.[2] The belief in one reality or existence as manifesting itself in many forms, including the gods and goddesses, is an under-current which runs throughout the Vedas and asserts itself as a stable conviction in the Upaniṣads. Hinduism in its subsequent development is firmly based on the foundations laid in the Upaniṣads which are at once the concluding and crowning parts of the Vedas. So we seem to be justified in saying that it is a monistic religion which believes in one existence or spiritual reality and treats all else as the

[1] *Cf. Ṛg-veda,* 2. 1. ff.
[2] *Cf. Ṛg-veda,* 1. 164. 46, 10. 114. 4.

manifestations thereof. As such, it should be distinguished from ordinary forms of theism or monotheism as found for example, in Christianity or Islam, which believe in one God but many realities. In these religions God is, of course, one and only one. But they admit more than one reality, namely, God, man and nature, and hold that neither man nor nature is a part of God and that they are externally related to one another. They believe also that God created the world out of nothing. Hinduism is perhaps the only religion in the world which holds that there is but one reality, and that the one reality creates or evolves the whole world of things and beings out of itself and abides in them all.

The one reality which reveals itself as the world of many is conceived as the Supreme Person in the Hindu religion. God is this Supreme Person (Puruṣottama). Even as early as the Vedas God was conceived in two aspects. God reveals Himself as the world and pervades it. But He is not exhausted in the world ; He is also beyond it. In the famous Puruṣa-sūkta of the *Ṛg-veda* we are told that 'the Supreme Person is all that is, all that was and all that will be, and that He pervades the whole world by a quarter of His being, while three-fourths of Him stand over as immortal in the sky'.[1] So also the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* declares: 'All this—in the past, present and future— is the Supreme Person !'[2] All existences—the earth, heavens, planets, gods, living and non-living objects—are conceived here as the parts of God, the Supreme Person, who pervades

[1] *Cf. Ṛg-veda,* 10. 90. 2-3.

[2] *Cf. Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad,* 3. 15.

the world and also remains beyond it. God is thus both immanent and transcendent in relation to the world. These two aspects of God persist throughout the Upaniṣads[1] and the later Vedānta. And they continue to be present in the Hindu conception of God down to the present day.

3. *God as Immanent*

In explaining the nature of God as conceived in Hinduism we shall do well to dwell on His transcendent and immanent aspects separately. The description of God in His immanent aspect would give us a relative idea of God. It would tell us what God appears to us to be in relation to the world of objects. We find in our experience that the objects of the world are all finite and limited, and that each of them owes its existence to other causes and conditions. Hence the world as a whole must come out of a supreme first cause. Further, we see that everything of the world depends for its continued existence on other things. So there must be a supreme ground that sustains and preserves them all. Again, we find that the things of the world are subject to decay and destruction, and the destruction of a thing means its dissolution into its material cause. So there must be an ultimate ground from which all things come and into which they are resolved on their final destruction. Hence it is that the ultimate reality underlying the world of objects is conceived as both the material and the efficient cause of the world, and we have the idea of God as the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. As it is the same God Who performs

[1] *Cf. Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* 2. 3. 1.

these three separate functions of creation, maintenance and destruction, we have in Hinduism the idea of three forms (trimūrti) of the Godhead. These three are called Brahmā or the creator, Viṣṇu or the preserver and Rudra or the destroyer respectively. They are really three powers of God, which are treated as three gods in popular religion and also popular works on Hinduism like the Purāṇas. The totality of God's powers is called prakṛti or māyā[1] which is believed to be constituted by three guṇas, namely, sattva, rajas and tamas. These three guṇas stand roughly for the preservative, creative and destructive powers of God respectively. Hence Brahmā is regarded as the embodiment of rajas, Viṣṇu of sattva, and Rudra of tamas. The idea of God as the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world is very well brought out in the *Bhagavad-gītā* when it says that 'God is the ultimate reality from which the whole world arises, by which it is sustained, and to which it returns on dissolution'.[2] So also we are told in the *Caṇḍī* that 'it is the divine power that creates, sustains and maintains the world and swallows it up at the end'.[3]

The name 'Bhagavān' is generally used by the Hindus to mean God. For this we have the authority of the ancient Hindu scriptures like the Upaniṣads where the same name is sometimes used for God.[4] This name is highly significant for our present purpose. It serves to indicate the principal contents

[1] *Cf. Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 4. 10.

[2] *Gītā*, 7. 5-6, 9. 17-18. *Cf.* here the idea of Brahman as *tajjalān* (i.e. origin, end and support of the universe) in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3. 14. 1.

[3] *Caṇḍī*, 1. 75.

[4] *Cf. Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 3. 11.

of the Hindu idea of God. God is named Bhagavān because He possesses to the full the six perfections (ṣaḍaiśvaryya) and is majestic, almighty, all-glorious, infinitely beautiful and possessed of infinite knowledge and perfect freedom from attachment. God's majesty (aiśvaryya) is not merely a matter of His being an overwhelming power. Rather, it consists in His being the benevolent Lord of all the sentient and the insentient world. He is almighty or omnipotent in so far as He is the ultimate source of all force or power we find in the world and there is nothing to limit His mighty power. The *Bhagavad-gītā* says: "The energy that is in the sun, the moon and in fire and that manifests the world is but a part of God's infinite power".[1] In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* the same idea is expressed, both positively and negatively, when it is stated that God is not manifested by the energy of the sun, the moon, the stars and the lightning, not to speak of fire, but all these are manifested by the energy of God.[2] The *Caṇḍī* also declares that 'whatever power there may be in anything of the world—animate or inanimate, past, present or future—is the power of the Divine Mother!'[3] God is all-glorious. His glory is manifest in all creation, especially in all glorious objects, from the starry heavens overhead to the heart within. He holds death and immortality in His hands.[4] Although one and absolute, He becomes many and mundane. He is both infinite and infinitesimal. He is manifested as the senses and

[1] *Gītā*, 15. 12-14.
[2] *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2. 5. 15. *Cf. Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 6. 14.
[3] *Caṇḍi*, 1. 82-83.
[4] "Yasya chāyā-mṛtaṁ yasya mṛtyuḥ" etc., *Ṛg-veda*, 10. 121. 2. "Amṛtañcaiva mṛtyuśca" etc., *Gītā*, 9. 19.

their objects, but has Himself no senses. He has no hand and foot, and yet He holds and moves fast; He has no eyes and ears, and still He sees and hears. He sees through all eyes, hears through all ears, moves and grasps with all feet and hands, eats and thinks through all mouths and heads that exist in the world. He knows all objects, but is never known as an object. He is the Ruler of all rulers, the God of all gods, and the Lord of all lords. He has no actions nor the means and instruments needed for them. Still, He possesses unlimited and innumerable powers like knowledge, will and action, which are parts of His nature. Such is the glory of God.[1] Then, God is conceived as the infinitely beautiful Being. All that is beautiful in the world is the manifestation of the beauty of the Supreme. All beauty is the expression of some harmony and any kind of harmony is a living unity-in-difference. It is the self or the spirit that is a real unity-in-difference. Hence it is that in all harmony as well as beauty there is the manifestation of the spiritual or the divine. In the beautiful objects of nature it is the Invisible and the Supersensible that is made visible and sensible. This idea is neatly expressed in the Hindu scriptures by a verse which means: "I bow down to the Divine Mother Who exists in all beings as their beauty".[2] God is also all-knowing or omniscient. His consciousness has no limit in time and space. In fact, consciousness is in itself unlimited and eternal. The limited and changing character of human conscious-

[1] *Cf. Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad,* 3-6.

[2] *Caṇḍī,* 5. 55. *Cf.* also verses 1. 78-82, 5. [illegible] for other attributes of God.

ness is *not due to the intrinsic nature* of consciousness itself, but to the limitations of its organs—the body and the senses. God's consciousness being free from these limitations is infinite and eternal. 'Not a sparrow falls to the ground without the notice of God, and *not a word is spoken without His know*ledge', this is what a pious Hindu honestly believes. Although God creates, maintains and destroys the world over and again, he is free from all attachment to it. He has no unfulfilled desires in Him which He wants to satisfy by means of His creative and destructive activities. The world's creation, preservation and destruction are free acts of His free will. His actions are not impelled by any selfish motives like the ones which underlie the activities of ordinary human beings. In respect of the ease and joy with which, and the disinterested spirit in which they are performed, God's actions are said to be of the nature of a sport or play (līlā). Just as play is the free expression of the abundance of vital energy, so God's activity of creation, preservation and destruction of worlds is a free expression of His infinite power. God is not in any way implicated in the world which is created, maintained and destroyed by Him. God pervades the world and sustains all beings, and yet He is not implicated in them. The activity of endless creation and destruction of worlds does not bind Him, because He has no attachment to and interest in them.[1]

Turning from the world outside to the self within, Hindu sages and saints discovered certain other

[1] *Cf. Gītā*, 4. 13-14, 9. 7-9; Rāmānuja, Śrībhāṣya, 1. 1. 1; *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, 2. 12. 42-44.

attributes of God which we should now explain. The most important of these is that which expresses God's intimate and vital relation to man. God is not a reality external to us; He is but the self in us. God dwells in our heart as its inner ruler and guide (antaryāmin). 'God is all-pervading and is the inmost self of all beings'.[1] He is also the gracious Lord Who guides us from one life to another till we attain our highest destiny, namely, union with God. Men are the sons of the Immortal, and it is both their birthright and divine destiny to attain immortality. The prolonged journey of the human soul from life to life through death is a continued course of education for self-realisation which is its salvation. And in this long journey of life God is our guide and saviour. No creature, not even man, is absolutely free in its actions. Man is a relatively free being. His actions are done by him under the direction and guidance of the Divine Being. Just as a wise and benevolent father directs his son to do certain things, according to his gifts, capacities and past attainments, so God directs all living beings to do such actions and feel such natural consequences thereof as are consistent with their past conduct and character. While man is the efficient instrumental cause (nimitta kāraṇa) of his actions, God is their efficient directive cause (prayojaka kartā). Thus God is the moral governor of the world of living beings including ourselves, the impartial dispenser of the fruits of their actions (karmaphaladātā) and

[1] *Cf. Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 6. 11; *Gītā*. 15. 15. *Cf.* also *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2. 5. 12, 2. 6. 17.

the supreme arbiter of their joys and sorrows.[1] God as the moral governor of the world is called Vidhātā and Niyantā. The law of karma which is popularly known as adṛṣṭa is under the control and guidance of God. It is God Who controls our adṛṣṭa and dispenses all the joys and sorrows of our life, in strict accordance with it. God as Vidhātā or the moral governor of the world combines happiness with virtue and misery with vice in the life of man. God is also our protector and saviour. He protects all men who are sincerely devoted and resigned to Him. Some great Hindu thinkers like Rāmānuja tell us that it is God's self-appointed, sacred function to protect and maintain all beings who are resigned unto Him. If we are sincerely devoted and completely resigned to God, there is no doubt that God will give us His grace and purge away the sins and evils in our life and remove all obstacles in the way of our attainment of unity with Him. God helps us in all the walks of our life if we work sincerely and whole-heartedly for the attainment of the appointed ends of our life. He is also our friend and guide in the religious life. God protects the truly religious soul and his religious life. He bestows on him His choicest gifts, namely, purity of the heart, steadiness of mind and enlightenment of the intellect, so that he may attain the highest end of life, viz. God.[2] God also comes down to the world and incarnates Himself to set the world right when the forces of evil threaten to disrupt and destroy the eternal religion of the world. God overpowers and extir-

[1] *Cf. Nyāya-sūtra* and *Bhāṣya*, 4. 1. 21.
[2] *Cf. Gītā*, 10. 10-11.

pates the evil powers and re-establishes the religious order of the world.[1] God is the eternal and immutable Person who in this aspect is called the preserver of religion eternal (śāśvata dharmagoptā).[2] The idea of God as immanent is very well expressed in a verse in the *Bhagavad-gītā* which means: 'God! Thou art the beginning and the end of the world, its creator, preserver and destroyer, its eternal ground, its protecting and presiding spirit, its ruler and moral governor, its support and final resting place, its friend, guide and saviour.'[3]

4. *God as Transcendent*

Now we come to the idea of God in His transcendent aspect. The Hindu scriptures are at one in teaching that although God creates and pervades the world and is immanent in it, yet He exists beyond the world and transcends it. The *Bhagavad-gītā* reiterates the fundamental teaching of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads on this point. It teaches that 'God is the Supreme Self whose lower nature is revealed as the physical world including mind, intellect and the ego, and whose higher nature constitutes the world of individual selves (jīvas). He pervades these worlds and maintains them in existence, and yet He transcends both these worlds and is, therefore, called the Supreme Person (puruṣottama) in the Vedas and Purāṇas'[4] What, then, can we know of God in

[1] *Cf. Gītā,* 4. 7-8.
[2] *Op. cit.,* 11. 18.
[3] *Op cit.,* 9. 18.
[4] *Op. cit.,* 7. 4-5, 15. 16-18.

His transcendent character? Here also the Hindu scriptures agree in declaring that we cannot know Him by our mind or the intellect nor can we describe Him in words or by means of language. 'The reality underlying all existence cannot be described either as existent or as non-existent'[1] 'It is that from which all speech with the mind turns away unable to reach it'.[2] 'The eye does not go thither, nor speech, nor the mind. We do not know it. We do not understand how any one can teach it. It is different from the known and also from the unknown'. 'That which words cannot express, but that by which words are expressed; that which the mind cannot think, but that by which the mind is enabled to think, know that alone to be Brahman'.[3] God in His transcendent nature is this Brahman. God Who is the object of devotion and worship is immanent in the world, and we know Him as its creator and moral governor. But God's transcendent character is such that we cannot know it by the use of our ordinary powers of thinking and reasoning. To know Him in His real transcendent character (svarūpa) we are to have a direct experience of Him through moral purification, continued meditation and deep concentration (samādhi).[4] It is in this way that the Hindu sages attained a deeper knowledge of God than that given by the discursive reason in us. Such knowledge is of the nature of a rare intuition or direct

[1] *Ṛg-veda*, 10. 129.

[2] *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, 2. 4.

[3] *Kena Upaniṣad*, 3-5.

[4] *Cf. Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 2. 6. 9-18; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2. 1-2, 3. 1-2.

realisation of God, and is different from an intellectual understanding of or a thought-construction about the nature of God. In the light of such intuitive experience the Hindu scriptures describe God's essential nature as pure existence, consciousness and bliss (sat-cit-ānanda), as reality, knowledge and infinity (satyaṁ-jñānaṁ-anantaṁ) and call Him one without a second (ekamevādvitīyam).[1]

What is thus known about the real nature of God through intuitive experience is also supported and justified by some Indian philosophers by certain strong rational grounds. What is real is never contradicted and sublated. It persists as the same thing through all changes and at all times and places. It never ceases to be, nor does it become other than what it is at any time and place. The particular forms of existence like the ordinary objects of experience cannot be real in this sense. They are subject to various changes in time and space and are also contradicted by one another. What, however, is common to all particular forms of existence, material as well as mental, is existence as such. All objects somehow exist. Even an illusory idea exists as an idea in the mind, and an illusory object refers to some existence as its locus. It is existence or being as such that persists through them all and is never contradicted. Existence, in some form or other, is as wide as thought, and we cannot conceive of the absence or denial of existence. *Existence* (not of any specific form but existence,

[1] 'Satyaṁ jñānaṁ anantaṁ brahma', *Taittirīya Upaniṣad,* 2. 1; 'Vijñānaṁ ānandaṁ brahma', *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* 3. 9. 28. *Cf.* also *Muṇḍaka,* 1. 1. 6; *Kaṭha,* 2. 6. 12.

pure and simple) is, therefore, ultimately real. This pure existence which is the common substratum of all objects is itself formless, though appearing in various forms; it is partless, though divisible into different forms; it is infinite, though it appears in all finite forms. This pure existence is of the nature of consciousness, for it is self-revealing. A mental state is conscious, because its existence is self-revealing. So also external objects reveal their existence in perception. The power of appearing or revealing itself is common to both internal and external forms of existence. Further, wherever there is the appearance of existence, there is awareness invariably present. Awareness pervades all forms of existence known to us. Hence pure existence which is common to all forms of existence and underlies both the internal and the external world must possess the power of revealing itself. Absolute existence is, therefore, of the nature of self-revealing consciousness. This absolute existence-consciousness is bliss as well. As there is no difference and diversity within it and no limiting causes and conditions outside it, it is free from all discords and conflicts. As such, it is one, undisturbed, tranquil existence which is the same as bliss itself. Of the absolute existence-consciousness-bliss, there cannot be different kinds, for it is the universal and all-pervasive ground of all kinds of existence. God in His transcendent nature is the absolute existence-consciousness-bliss and is one without a second.[1]

[1] *Vide* Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahma-sūtra*, 2. 1. 14-20, and *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6. 2. 1-2.

5. *God as Self*

According to all religions, God is spirit. Hinduism goes further and teaches that God is the self in us and beyond us. Now the self or spirit in its real nature is pure existence, consciousness and bliss ; it is one, infinite and eternal. But the self in its real character is hardly known or experienced by us. Ordinarily, a man identifies himself with the body which is nourished by food and made of the five physical elements. But if a man were really this body, he would be subject to the changes which overcome the latter and cannot be said to remain the same person through different stages of his life. The self, therefore, is not the body. For the same reason, the self cannot be regarded as identical with the senses and the principle of life with which the body is endowed. Deeper than life and the senses is man's mind (manas) which controls and guides them. But man's real self is different from his mind. The mind of man changes from day to day, even from moment to moment ; but the man himself does not so change. Deeper than the mind is man's intellect (buddhi) which uses the mind as an internal organ or instrument of its function. The intellect ceases to function in the state of deep sleep, but even then the self of man does not cease to exist. So man's intellect is not his real self. In deep sleep the mind and the intellect cease to function, and what then remains of man is simply consciousness of joy, which therefore seems to be the still deeper reality in man. But even this consciousness of joy is not man's real self, for the self *continues* to be when that consciousness

ceases and is no longer.[1] The real self of man stands revealed in a state of deep concentration (samādhi) which is attainable by following a long and laborious course of moral and religious training (sādhanā). In deep concentration the mind and the intellect cease to function. So there is then no consciousness of any objects, including even internal mental states. Still, it is not a state of unconsciousness, for that would make it indistinguishable from death. One who attains the state of samādhi does not die and come back to life after some time. Rather, in deep concentration one continues to exist and to be conscious, although one does not exist as an individual person and is not conscious of any particular thing. This existence which is not any particular form of existence and this consciousness which is not any particular form of consciousness are what remain of man when he gets rid of all his adjuncts and external coverings. These are the inalienable and inseparable characters of man's self and, therefore, these alone constitute his real self. The self in man is thus pure existence and pure consciousness. As such, it is also pure bliss or peace. In pure existence and consciousness there cannot be any conflict of objects and interests, for these do not contain any plurality of objects within them. In deep sleep in which we are not trammelled and tormented by the thoughts of objects and the cravings of life, there is a consciousness of joy. But this

[1] *Vide Taittirīya Upaniṣad,* 2. 1-5. *Cf. Gītā,* 3. 42: "The senses are higher than the body, the mind is higher than the senses, the intellect is higher than the mind, and the self is the transcendent subject which stands higher than even the intellect".

consciousness is limited, because it is dependent on certain conditions. The self as pure existence and consciousness is free from these conditions and is, therefore, unlimited bliss. Pure existence and consciousness are also above the limitations of space, time and causality. Only particular modes of existence and consciousness are limited in space and time, and are governed by the law of causality. The self being above space, time and causality is one, infinite and eternal.[1] This self is the reality underlying both man and the world. It is, therefore, identical with God. Thus God is the self or spirit in us and beyond us. And, as self, He is pure existence, consciousness and bliss ; He is one, infinite and eternal ; He is free and immortal. Such, according to Hinduism, is God in His essential and transcendent character.

6. *Hindu View of God—Panentheism*

In Hinduism we have thus a conception of God as both immanent in the world and transcendent over it. This idea is expressed figuratively in the Vedas when it is said that God pervades the whole world by a fourth of His Being, while three-fourths of Him remain beyond it. The same idea is expressed in the Upaniṣads in different ways. Sometimes we are told that God is beyond the reach of the senses and the mind, of our thought and speech. Sometimes it is more definitely stated that God is present in all beings as their inmost self and yet is not affected by their sorrows. for He transcends them all. 'Just as the sun lends eye-sight to all living beings

[1] *Vide Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad,* I. I. 6.

and yet is not infected by their visual or other external defects, so the Absolute dwells in the heart of all beings and yet is not affected by their sorrows, for He transcends them.'[1] Again, we find it very clearly stated in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* that God has two well known aspects, of which one is with a limited form and the other is formless, one is mortal and the other immortal, one moving and the other motionless, one visible and the other invisible.[2] The *Bhagavad-gītā* which is practically an exegesis of Hinduism repeats the same idea in unmistakable words. It leaves no doubt in our mind as to the transcendent as well as immanent character of God when it says that '*God pervades the whole universe, and all things and beings are in God, but God is not wholly in them,*' and that 'God holds and supports all beings *within* Him, yet He is not contained within them'.[3] In view of this clear recognition of both the immanent and the transcendent nature of God which we find in it, we are to say that the Hindu conception of God is monistic, but not pantheistic. Still, some Western critics make a sweeping characterisation of Hindu philosophy and religion as pantheism. The word 'pantheism' etymologically means all-God-theory. But this may mean either of two things. It may mean the view that God is the mere totality of all objects of the world, so that God is exhausted in the world and the two are identical. Or, it may mean the view that God is the totality of all things and something more,

[1] *Vide Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* 2. 5. 9-11.
[2] *Vide Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* 2. 3. 1.
[3] *Vide Gītā,* 9. 4-5.

so that all is God no doubt, but God is more than all this. When such distinction is made, the word 'pantheism' is generally confined to the first view, whereas 'panentheism' (all-*in*-God-theory) is used for the second. To avoid the ambiguity of the word 'pantheism' and to remind ourselves of the fact that God in Hinduism is not simply immanent, but also transcendent, we should call the Hindu theory of God panentheism, rather than pantheism.

CHAPTER III

THE CONCEPTION OF SELF

1. *Meaning of The Self*

By the self we here mean the individual self or the embodied soul. In Hinduism the individual self is called jīvātmā as distinguished from God who is called paramātmā or the Supreme Self. Although the one is regarded as a manifestation of the other, yet the distinction between the two is that while the first has a body and is subject to certain limitations, the second is free from all limitations. The individual self is generally taken to mean the embodied self or the soul in its bodily setting. But the embodied condition of the soul is neither its original nor its final condition. The individual self is usually related to a body no doubt, but it is quite distinct from the body, the senses and the mind. Even when associated with the body, it can realise its utter distinction from the latter and abide in its pure essence as the self-conscious spirit which is above everything material. The distinction between the soul and the body or the mind is fundamental to the Hindu religion. Hence with regard to the self we have to make a distinction between its embodied and its essential characters. The one set may be called its empirical and the other its real or noumenal characters. But it is the same self that has these two kinds of characters. The self in its empirical character does not become a different self like the one which is called the empirical self by some philosophers or philosophical systems. It is not the case that there are two selves in a man, one empiri-

cal and the other noumenal. Rather, it is the same self that has different characters, of which some are due to its embodied condition and may, therefore, be called empirical, and some are intrinsic or natural to it and may thus be called real or noumenal. We shall explain these characters separately.

2. *The Empirical Characters of the Self*

The empirical characters of the self may be considered under three chief heads, namely, the bodily or physical, the mental or psychical, and the moral or ethical. The individual self born in this world has a threefold body which is usually spoken of as three different bodies, namely, the gross or sthūla, the subtle or sūkṣma and the causal or kāraṇa.

The gross body of the self is born of parents and is composed of the five physical elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether. It is nourished by food and is accordingly described as the self's annamaya koṣa or food sheath. It serves as the medium for the self's experience and enjoyment of the gross physical objects of the world (bhogāyatana). It is the basis of what is known as the waking consciousness (jāgrat). At death the individual self leaves the old gross body behind it and finds its abode in a new body as the organ of its activities.

The second body of the soul is called sūkṣma-śarīra because it is constituted by elements finer than those of the gross body and cannot, like the latter, be perceived by the external senses. It is also called liṅga-śarīra because it serves as a sign (liṅga) from which we may know, i.e. infer the existence of

the soul. Vital and psychical functions require a soul underlying them. The subtle body is a combination of seventeen elements, namely, mind, intellect, the ten sense-motor organs and the five vital breaths.[1]. So it is said to be a combination of the prāṇamaya or vital, the manomaya or mental and the vijñānamaya or sheaths of the soul. It serves as the basis of our dream-consciousness and as the medium of transmigration of the soul from one body to another. At death the individual soul leaves the gross body to be reduced to ashes, but carries the subtle one with it and takes its abode in a new body which is suited to its past character as preserved in the subtle body. What kind of body the departed soul would have in the next life is determined by the effects of its past desires, thoughts and deeds as these are preserved in the subtle body.

The third body of the individual self is called kāraṇa-śarīra or the causal body in so far as it is the original ground from which the gross and the subtle body arise. It is the substratum of the blissful experience of sound sleep when the individual soul is not disturbed by thoughts or moved by desires for the objects of the world. So it is called the ānandamaya-koṣa or blissful sheath of the individual soul. It is also the ground into which the individual's gross and subtle bodies are absorbed (layasthāna) during deep sleep. The individual self casts

[1] These seventeen elements are the five sense organs of sight, touch, hearing, taste and smell, the five motor organs of speech, prehension, locomotion, excretion and reproduction, the five vital breaths of prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna and samāna, and manas or mind and buddhi or intellect.

off all these bodies when it realises its true nature and is thereby liberated.[1]

The psychical characters of the self are of three kinds, namely, the cognitive, the affective and the conative. Sometimes the self is said to have in it three qualities, namely, desire or will, wisdom or knowledge and activity. But the more widely accepted view is that the self is an immaterial substance to which all cognitions, feelings and conations belong as its attributes. Desire, aversion and volition, pleasure and pain, and cognition or knowledge are all qualities of the soul. These cannot belong to anything physical or material, for they are not, like physical qualities, perceived by the external senses. Hence they must belong to some immaterial substance called the soul. But it should be remembered here that all these psychical characters belong to the soul in its embodied condition. They fall off and disappear when the self attains liberation through a right knowledge of its real nature. The soul in its real nature is unchanging, conscious spirit. But during its life on earth, it has such functions as cognition, desire and will, and is regarded as an agent who strives and acts, enjoys and suffers.

There are four states of consciousness of the self. As related to some kind of gross body, it passes through the states of waking, dream and deep sleep. The self in its waking consciousness is called viśva or the seer of the spatio-temporal world. In the state of dream it is known as taijasa or the shin-

[1] *Vide* Sadānanda, *Vedānta-sāra,* Sections, 17, 29, 35 and 45. *Cf. Devī-bhāgavata,* 7. 32. 30 f. ; *Taittirīya Upaniṣad,* 2. 1-5.

ing light of the subtle body of subconscious desires and impressions. In the state of deep, dreamless sleep it is designated as prājña or the wise one who frees himself from the embarrassing conditions of ordinary life and reverts to his pristine state of bliss, although that be for a short period of time. The fourth state of pure consciousness called turīya is not an empirical, but a transcendental state of the self, and so it will be explained afterwards in its proper place.[1]

The moral attributes of the self are more important and fundamental than its bodily and psychical qualities. In fact, its bodily, psychical and other conditions are grounded on its moral characters. The body that an individual has, the family and society in which he is born, the mind and the intellect with which he is endowed are all conditioned and determined by his past moral character. We get just that kind of body, mind and intellect for which we have rendered ourselves fit by our previous moral deserts. The moral qualities of the individual self are the effects of its own karma or acts. There are three general types of activities which are natural to the individual, namely, the bodily (kāyika), the mental (mānasika) and the vocal (vācanika). These activities produce certain moral effects in the life of the self over and above their physical effects. Good acts produce merit (puṇya), while evil actions produce demerit (pāpa) in the embodied individual. Virtue and vice as moral qualities respectively arise out of the good and bad deeds, thoughts and words of the individual. All actions, however, have their root in

[1] *Loc. cit. Vide* also *Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad*, 2-7.

the nature (prakṛti) of the individual soul as constituted by the three guṇas of sattva, rajas and tamas. While the soul in its real nature is above the guṇas, it is apt to confuse itself with them in the embodied condition and own them as a part of its nature. The guṇas are the primal elements which combine in different proportions to constitute all objects of the world. An individual in whom sattva or the element of luminosity predominates is called sāttvika and is characterised by such attributes as virtue (dharma), knowledge (jñāna), dispassion (vairāgya) and excellence (aiśvaryya). An individual in whom rajas or the element of mobility is dominant is called rājasika. He is swayed by the desires, passions and impulses of our natural life and is engaged in all sorts of activities. The individual who is dominated by tamas or the element of passivity is called tāmasika and has such bad qualities as vice, ignorance, infatuation, greed, apathy, laziness, etc.

In respect of their moral status individual souls are divided into three classes, namely, the nitya, the mukta and the bandha. The first group includes souls which have never been in bondage and are thus eternally free, e.g. Nārada, Prahlāda, etc. The second class consists of individuals who were once in bondage but are now free and liberated, e.g. Janaka, Vaśiṣṭha. To the third class belong ordinary individuals who are in bondage to the world and are swayed by passions, desires and lust for things of sense. The individuals of this class are bound to the wheel of birth and death and wander from life to life until they are liberated through perfection of

their moral character and realisation of the true nature of the self in them.[1]

3. *The Real or Noumenal Characters of the Self*

Now we proceed to consider the real or noumenal character of the self. As we have already said, the distinction between the self on the one hand, and the body, the senses, the mind, intellect and ego, on the other is fundamental to the Hindu religion. A man's self is different from his body and the senses. We use such expressions as "my body", "my senses". This shows that the body and the senses are certain objects which belong to me but are not identical with myself. Further, while the body and the senses undergo change and mutilation, a man remains the same self throughout. For the same reasons, a man's self must be distinguished from his mind, intellect and the ego. All these are objects for the self and, therefore, not identical with it. The mind, intellect and ego of a man cease to function in the states of deep sleep, swoon and ecstasy, but even then his self abides as a conscious reality. Nor can the self be regarded as an aggregate of conscious states or a stream of consciousness. But for the abiding reality of a permanent self, we cannot speak of an aggregate of many states or of a stream of the same stuff. Nor, again, can we explain the indubitable experience of our personal identity. Many states make one aggregate only as they are held together by the same witnessing self. A flowing stream is not conscious of itself as one and the same. It is the same or appears to be the same

[1] *Vide Gītā*, 14. 5-20; *Cf.* also *Sāṅkhya-kārikā*, 12-13, 36-37.

only for the same observer of its flow from beginning to end. All such considerations lead the Hindu thinkers to the view that the real self of an individual is a permanent, self-conscious being or an unchanging immutable spirit.

The real self of man is revealed in the turīya state of consciousness, to which we have just referred before. It is a state of deep concentration (samādhi) which is attainable through yoga. In this state the body and the senses, the mind and the intellect cease to function. So there is here no consciousness of any objects, including internal mental states. Still, it is not a state of unconsciousness, for that would make it indistinguishable from death. One who attains the state of turīya or samādhi does not die, and come back to life after some time. Rather, in this state one continues to exist and to be conscious, although one does not exist as a particular individual and is not conscious of any particular object. As free from the conflicts of the ordinary objects and interests of life, it is also a state of permanent peace or bliss. It is a state in which the self abides in its own essence as pure consciousness, enjoying the still vision of pure self-shining existence.[1] Thus pure existence, consciousness and bliss are what remain of man when he gets rid of his separable adjuncts and outer coverings. These then are the inalienable and essential characters of man's real self. As compared with these, all the physical, psychical and even moral characters which we have explained before, are external and accidental to the self. They form no part of the essential nature of the self, but are certain

[1] *Cf. Yoga-sūtra,* I. 3.

accretions that clothe the self in its worldly life. It is sheer ignorance to think that the self is the body or the senses, the mind, the intellect or even the ego. But when, through such ignorance, the self confuses itself with these things, it seems to have their attributes and considers itself to be *somebody* having a certain name, belonging to a certain caste and being subject to birth and death, pleasure and pain. It is the inordinate desire for enjoyment of the pleasures of sense that darkens and envelopes man's discriminative insight and misleads him to identify his self with the body, the mind, etc.[1] In truth, however, the selves that abide in the bodies of living beings are neither born, nor do they die. They are eternal, indestructible and unchangeable. With regard to them it cannot properly be said that they were non-existent in the past or that they would cease to *be* in future. They exist eternally, and are not born and destroyed with the birth and death of this body. Birth and death are only transitions of the self from one body to another like its transition through the states of childhood, youth and old age in the same body. It is the body that is subject to disintegration and destruction, but not the self. 'Weapons cannot cut it, fire cannot burn it, nor can water wet and air wither it. It cannot be cut, burnt, moistened or dried up. It is eternal, ubiquitous, immovable, immobile and uncaused. It is beyond the reach of the senses and the mind, and it is above all changes.'[2]

It would appear from what we have said before

[1] *Cf. Gītā,* 3. 37-43.

[2] *Cf. Gītā,* 2. 12-13, 20-25.

that the individual self in its real nature is a conscious and eternal reality which does not really possess any physical or mental quality. As eternal and unchanging it has no activity or movement in it. Activity or motion involves change in some form or other, and cannot therefore really belong to the self which is unchanging. So it is said that 'all actions take place within the material world (prakṛti or primal matter) and the self considers itself to be an agent or doer only when it is deluded by and wrongly identified with, the ego.'[1] The self is different from the ego or the moral agent who strives for good or bad ends, attains them and enjoys or suffers accordingly. All changes and activities, all thoughts and feelings, all pleasures and pains, all joys and sorrows really belong to the mind-body. The self is quite distinct from the mind-body complex and is, therefore, beyond all the affections and afflictions of the psycho-physical organism.[2] It is the mind, and not the self, that feels pleasure or pain, and is happy or unhappy. So also, virtue and vice, merit and demerit, in short, all moral properties belong to the ego (ahaṅkāra) which is the agent or doer of all acts. What belong to the essence of the self are thus pure existence, consciousness and bliss. As such, the self is also immortal and free. The self is the transcendent subject of experience whose very essence is pure existence and consciousness, eternity, freedom and immortality. It is pure existence in the sense that its being is not any particular form or mode of existence. It is being or existence

[1] *Cf. Gītā,* 3. 27-29.

[2] *Cf. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* 4. 4. 12.

as such, but not any particular form of being or existence. Similarly, it is pure consciousness, i.e. consciousness *as such*, and not any particular form or mode of consciousness. The particular changing modes of consciousness which, when taken collectively, we call the empirical consciousness belong, not to the self, but to the mind. The self is the *subject* or *witness* of mental changes as of bodily and physical changes, but is as much distinct from the former as from the latter. The self is neither in space and time nor governed by the law of causality. Only particular physical things, made up of parts, are in space, and particular things and events are dated in time. The self being *no particular thing or event* is neither in space nor in time. Being above space and time, it is not subject to the law of causality which governs only those things which have an origin in time and interact with one another in space. Now a being that is not governed by the laws of space, time and causality is essentially and eternally free. The self is thus freedom itself in so far as it is above the space-time and the cause-effect order of existence. It is also eternal and immortal, because it is not produced by any cause and cannot be destroyed in any way.

4. *Different Views of the Self*

The conception of the self, as explained above, is generally accepted by the Hindu thinkers and religious teachers of different ages. But there are certain schools of Hindu philosophy and religion which hold different views on certain points.[1] The

[1] For a detailed account of the theories of self in the different systems of Indian Philosophy, see *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* by S. C. Chatterjee and D. M. Datta.

real self, we have said, is pure consciousness itself, and it neither acts nor enjoys and suffers the consequences thereof. But some schools of Hindu thought hold that consciousness is only the essential quality of the self and that it acts, and enjoys and suffers, and is thus the ego in us. Then, we are told by the Vaiṣṇava schools of the Vedānta that the individual self is not infinite and all-pervading, but finite and atomic. There are also different views with regard to the relation of the individual self to the absolute or God. The Advaita Vedānta stands for an unqualified monism and holds that the jīva or the individual self is verily Brahman or the absolute itself and nothing else. The other schools of the Vedānta, however, hold either that the individual is different in form but identical in essence with the absolute self or that it is distinct and different from the absolute in both. According to them, there is a fundamental distinction between the two which can never be completely lost. Even when the individual self becomes liberated and perfect, it does not become identical with God. The liberated soul having pure consciousness as its attribute is *similar* in nature to God, or has powers similar to those of God, but it never becomes identical with God. It remains a part of God and, as a distinct individual, enjoys the blessed experience of communion with God. Almost all the different schools of Hindu philosophy and religion, however, agree in maintaining that the individual self is an uncreated and eternal spiritual reality which is quite distinct from the body and the senses, the mind and the intellect. The perfection of the individuals lies in the direct experience or realisation of this truth. To realise this noble truth is to

be liberated and free from sin and suffering. Once we realise or *see* that our self is the unborn and undying spirit in us, the eternal and immortal subject of experience, we become free from all misery and suffering. It is possible for every individual to realise the self in this way and thereby attain liberation in life in this world. This kind of liberation is known as jīvanmukti or emancipation of the soul while living in this body. After the death of its present body, the liberated self attains what is called videhamukti or emancipation of the spirit from all bodies, gross and subtle. Here, however, some Hindu thinkers would say that it is only the latter and not the former that should be regarded as true liberation, since it is not possible for the embodied soul to be *completely free from the influence of bodily* and mental changes and afflictions. But there is a consensus of opinion among them that liberation is to be attained through realisation of the self as eternal and immortal spirit, transcending the physical and the mental order of existence. Liberation through self-realisation is the end of our life and the aim of almost all the systems of Hindu philosophy and religion.

CHAPTER IV

THEORY OF THE WORLD

1. *The Conception of the World or Brahmāṇḍa*

In this chapter we propose to explain the Hindu theory of the world. By the Hindu theory of the world is meant the whole body of ideas about the nature, origin, maintenance and destruction of the world as found in the Hindu religion and philosophy. The theories of the world as found in the older religious scriptures being somewhat confusing and conflicting, we shall have to refer especially to the Hindu systems of philosophy for more light on this subject.

In Hinduism the world is called Brahmāṇḍa, a word which literally means the 'egg of Brahmā' and suggests that the world is evolved out of Brahmā, the personified creative energy of God. The world or Brahmāṇḍa generally means a universe which comprises seven *lokas* or regions, namely, the bhūr-loka or the earth with seven subterranean talas or surfaces,[1] the bhuvar-loka or antarīkṣa-loka, i.e. the sky above the earth with the sun, the planets and the stars set therein, the svar-loga or māhendra-loka, i.e. the first heaven just above the sky, the mahar-loka or prājāpatya-loka, i.e. the second heaven, jana-

[1] The seven subterranean regions of Brahmāṇḍa are called Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasātala, Talātala, Mahātala and Pātāla. These lie one below the other while the other seven upper regions lie one above the other. The Brahmāṇḍa is thus popularly said to be constituted by fourteen regions in all, within which there are other minor regions. The account given of the Brahmāṇḍa in different texts is somewhat different. We have followed here the account given in the *Vedānta-sāra*, sec. 43. *Vide Yoga-bhāṣya*, 3. 26, for a detailed account of the seven lokas and their occupants.

loka or the third heaven, tapo-loka or the fourth heaven, and satya-loka or the fifth heaven. These seven lokas or regions are within the Brahmāṇḍa which thus contains the solar system and many other regions within it. But even beyond it, some Purāṇas place two other lokas, namely, Vaikuṇṭha and Go-loka or the sixth and the seventh heaven.[1] Now, we are told that there are many or rather, innumerable Brahmāṇḍas or world systems. The succession of Brahmāṇḍas in time is beginningless and endless, and all around this Brahmāṇḍa of ours there blaze an infinite number of other similar Brahmāṇḍas.[2] One Brahmāṇḍa comes into being, lasts for a period of time and then disappears, only to be succeeded by another which also passes through the same cycle; and the cycle goes on repeating itself eternally. But the process of evolution in the separate Brahmāṇḍas and in the whole universe containing many Brahmāṇḍas is the same or very similar. Here we shall be concerned with the evolution of the world or Brahmāṇḍa in which we live, move and have our being.

Hinduism does not believe in the creation of the world out of nothing. On the other hand, it generally holds that the world is evolved by God out of Himself, although we sometimes find in it the idea that the world is created by God out of pre-existing material or that it is evolved by Prakṛti or primal matter out of herself independently of the agency of God or the self. The ideas that the world comes out of God by a process of evolution, that it is sustained

[1] *Cf. Viṣṇu-purāṇa*, 1. 3. 2. 7; *Devī-bhāgavata*, 9. 8-10, 12-16.
[2] *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*, 6; *Devī-bhāgavata*, 9. 3. 7. 8.

by God and that it finally returns to Him on dissolution, which govern the general trend of Hindu religious thought, are very well explained by reference to several analogies. 'Just as the spider weaves its web from within itself and draws it in, the herbs spring from the earth, and hair grows out of a man's body, so does the world come out of the immutable God.' 'Just as from a blazing fire sparks are thrown off in thousands, so from God various beings are born and to Him they return.' Then we are told more directly and plainly that from God issue forth life, mind, the senses, ether, air, fire, water, earth, and gods, men, birds and beasts.[1] The same idea is more philosophically expressed in the later Hindu scriptures. God has a lower nature which is differentiated into eight forms, namely, earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intellect and the ego. He has a higher nature which is manifested as the world of individual selves. All beings, conscious and unconscious, arise out of this twofold nature of God who is thus the origin and end of the whole universe.[2]

2. *The Paurāṇika Theory of the World*

The account of the evolution of the world out of God as given in the ancient scriptures or the Purāṇas, which is more imaginative and mythological, is as follows. 'He (God) having meditated, desiring to create various beings from His own body, first put forth the waters; in these He placed the seed. That become a golden egg, as radiant as the

[1] *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 1. 1. 7; 2. 1. 1, 3, 7. *Cf. Nārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*, 1. 1.

[2] *Cf. Gītā*, 7. 4-6; 10. 20.

sun. In that was born Brahmā, the grandsire of all worlds."[1] This means that it is God's will to create a world that moves prakṛti or the primal divine energy to act and conceive Brahmā or Hiraṇyagarbha, the world-soul, who is endowed with infinite powers of knowledge, will and action. Now Brahmā is the creator of the world in all its aspects, subtle and gross, mental and physical. He does not create the world out of nothing, but evolves it out of Himself. Brahmā is sorrounded by prakṛti or pradhāna, the ultimate cosmic energy, in which the guṇas or its constituent elements are held in equilibrium. His energy disturbs the equilibrium and there is a tremendous motion in prakṛti ; and as a result thereof there is the appearance of mahat or buddhi, the cosmic consciousness. Out of buddhi comes ahaṅkāra, the principle of individuation which differentiates homogeneous, primal matter into elements of the finest kind. With the predominance of tamas in prakṛti, there arise out of ahaṅkāra the five tanmātras or subtle essences of ether, air, fire, water and earth. And out of these, again, the gross elements of the same name are formed by the combination of the one with the others in different proportions. Similarly, with the predominance of rajas, ahaṅkāra gives rise to the five sense-organs and the five action-organs. The same ahaṅkāra when dominated by sattva generates the ten presiding deities of the sense and the motor organs, and the mind which is their co-ordinating organ. The work of creation proceeds by calling into existence the devas or deities who guide and control the forces of

[1] *Manu-smṛti*, I. 8-9 ; *cf.* also I. 2.

nature. All objects of the physical world—minerals, planets, animals, men—appear after the primary creations of mahat, the subtle elements and sense-motor organs. The gross elements compose the physical bodies of the jīvas and the various lokas or globes which they inhabit. Their subtle bodies are formed by the subtle elements and the subtle products of prakṛti. The sum-total of all subtle bodies is the body of Brahmā. As Brahmā is concerned with the creation of the world, so Viṣṇu, the personified conservative energy of God, preserves and maintains the world in existence, and Śiva, the god of destruction, disintegrates and destroys it at the end. These three processes—creation, maintenance and destruction of the world—make one complete cycle (kalpa) which has been repeating itself eternally. One cycle is as long as a day and a night of Brahmā, each being equal to 432 million years of men. The idea that all things and beings of the world arise out of prakṛti through the influence of God is concisely, although figuratively, expressed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* where it is stated that all beings arise out of mahad-brahma or prakṛti which is the matrix into which God infuses the germ of creation, and that God is the Father and prakṛti the matrix of all creation.[1]

3. *The Philosophical Theories of the World*

Coming to the Hindu systems of philosophy, we find somewhat different theories of creation in them. These are more rational than the Paurāṇika accounts, but not completely free from the influence of the

[1] *Gītā*, 14. 3-4.

mythological tradition. They, however, agree on one important point which is not so clearly brought out in the ancient scriptures. This is the rationale of creation, or the moral background of the created universe. In Hinduism the world is regarded as a moral stage for the education and emancipation of individual souls. It is not the play of blind physical forces which fortuitously produce the world to no purpose. On the other hand, the order and history of the world are ultimately guided by the moral law of karma, according to which all individual souls must reap the fruits of their own deeds done in this or some previous life. The world is created, maintained and destroyed by God in order that individual selves may have just those experiences of pleasure and pain which they deserve by their good or bad actions. The creation and destruction of the world thus serve the moral end of Divine dispensation. This moral outlook is what constitutes the fundamental unity of the chief systems of Hindu philosophy which differ more or less from one another with regard to the nature of the world and the process of creation.

(*i*) The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Theory

In the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system we find a philosophy which combines pluralism with theism. It believes in many independent and eternal realities like the four kinds of atoms of earth, water, fire and air, ākāśa or ether, space, time, minds and souls. According to it, God creates the world of composite objects out of these pre-existing materials. But the process of creation and destruction of the world is guided and controlled by God according to the moral

law of karma. God wills to create a world in which individual souls may get their proper share of the experiences of pleasure and pain according to their moral deserts. When God thus wills to create a world, the unseen forces of moral deserts (adṛṣṭa) in the eternal, individual souls begin to function in the direction of creation and the active life of experiences (bhoga). It is contact with souls, endowed with the creative function of adṛṣṭa, that first sets in motion the atoms of air. Out of the combination of air atoms arises the gross element of air and it exists as a vibrating medium in ākāśa or ether. Then, in a similar way, there is motion in the atoms of water and the production of the gross element of water which exists in the air and is moved by it. Next, the atoms of earth are set in motion and compose the gross element of earth which exists in water. Then, from the atoms of fire arises, in a similar way, the gross element of fire which exists with its luminosity in the gross water. After this and by the mere thought of God, there appears the embryo of a world (brahmāṇḍa) out of the atoms of fire and earth. God animates that embryo with Brahmā, the world-soul. To Brahmā God entrusts the work of creation in its details and with proper adjustment between merit and happiness, and demerit and misery. The created world is maintained in existence for a long time and then it is destroyed by God to provide a way of escape from suffering for all living beings for some time. When in the course of time Brahmā gives up his body, there appears in God a desire to destroy the world. With this, the adṛṣṭa or unseen moral deserts of individual souls operate as a destructive force. It is in contact with such souls that there is motion in the

constituent atoms of their body and senses. On account of this motion there is disjunction of the atoms of the elemental earth and its disintegration through the cessation of their conjunction. In this way there is destruction of the physical elements of earth, water, fire and air, one after the other. Thus all composite physical things, the four elements, all bodies and sense organs are destroyed, and what remain are atoms in isolation and the eternal substances of ākāśa, time, space, minds, and souls with their merit and demerit. This is the state of the world's destruction which continues till a process of fresh creation is started by the will of God.[1]

(*ii*) The Sāṅkhya Theory

The Sāṅkhya theory of the world is, on the face of it, atheistic. Here the creation of the world is not guided by any intelligent being like God, but is a natural process of development out of prakṛti or primal matter when it comes in contact with puruṣa or the selves. The evolution of the world, no doubt, serves to realise the moral and spiritual ends of our life, and obeys the law of karma in general. But this is not due to the activity of any self, human or divine. It is brought about by prakṛti with its immanent, but unconscious teleology. Creation does not mean the production of the world which did not exist before in any form. It is just the manifestation of what was previously unmanifested. Hence we are to say that the world was in an unmanifested form in its ultimate material cause, called prakṛti or pra-

[1] *Cf.* *Padārtha-dharma-saṅgraha*, pp. 19-23; *Nyāya-kandalī*, pp. 50-54; *Kusumāñjali*, 1-5.

dhāna. Prakṛti is the unmanifested cosmic energy in which the three guṇas or the ultimate constituents of the world, namely, sattva, rajas and tamas, are held in equilibrium. With the contact between puruṣa and prakṛti, there is a disturbance of the equilibrium and a tremendous commotion in the infinite bosom of prakṛti, in which each of the guṇas tries to preponderate over the rest. There is, then, a gradual differentiation and integration of the three guṇas, and, as a result of their combination in different proportions, the various objects of the world are produced. From prakṛti arises, first, mahat or buddhi which, in one aspect, is the great germ of the universe and, in another aspect, is the intellect in individual beings. The second product of prakṛti is ahaṅkāra or the ego which arises directly out of mahat, the first manifestation, and makes the self to think of itself as 'I' and of objects as 'mine'. It is the principle of individuation which differentiates the homogeneous cosmic energy into distinct and separate centres of existence. From ahaṅkāra as predominated by sattva arise the five organs of perception (jñānendriya), the five organs of action (karmendriya) and the mind (manas). From the same ahaṅkāra, when dominated by tamas, arise the five subtle elements or tanmātras of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. Ahaṅkāra as dominated by rajas is concerned in both these cases and supplies the energy needed for the change of sattva and tamas into their respective products. The tanmātras are not material atoms, but the infra-atomic essences or potentialities out of which the five gross elements (mahābhūta) arise in the following way. From the essence of sound (śabdatanmātra) is produced ākāśa with the quality of sound which is per-

ceived by the ear. From the essence of touch (sparśatanmātra), combined with that of sound, arises air with the qualities of sound and touch. Out of the essence of colour (rūpatanmātra), mixed with those of sound and touch, there arises light or fire with the qualities of sound, touch and colour. From the essence of taste (rasatanmātra), combined with those of sound, touch and colour, is produced the element of water with the properties of sound, touch, colour and taste. The essence of smell (gandhatanmātra), combined with the other four, gives rise to earth which has all the five qualities of sound, touch, colour, taste and smell. From the combination of these physical elements (mahābhūtas) arise all composite physical objects including the gross and the subtle body. But these are not regarded as separate principles, because they are only compounds of other principles.[1]

The history of the world is, on the Sāṅkhya view, a play of twenty-five principles, of which prakṛti is the first and the five gross elements are the last. But it is not complete in itself and has a necessary reference to the world of selves as the witnesses or enjoyers thereof. It is not a mechanical system which has no rational purposes behind it. On the other hand, it serves the most fundamental ends of the moral and spiritual life. In the Sāṅkhya, the evolution of prakṛti into a world of objects makes for a moral order in which individual selves may realise themselves and attain the highest end of life, namely, liberation.

[1] *Cf. Sāṅkhya-sūtra,* 1. 71; 2. 23-43; *Kārikā* and *Kaumudī,* 21-41; *Pravacanabhāṣya,* 1. 64-74; 2. 10-32.

(*iii*) The Yoga Theory

In the Yoga system we have a theistic theory of the world. In it God is regarded as the Supreme Person who is distinct from all other persons in being eternally free from all defects. He is also the Supreme Ruler of the world, and has infinite knowledge, unlimited power and perfect wisdom. The creation of the world is due to the association between puruṣa and prakṛti, and its dissolution to the dissociation of the one from the other. But these cannot be effected by individual selves who are limited in power and knowledge. God is the perfect and omniscient Being who brings about the association or dissociation between puruṣa and prakṛti, according as the adṛṣṭa of the individual selves requires the creation or destruction of the world. Without the guidance of God, prakṛti cannot produce just that order of the world which is suited to the moral education and final emancipation of individual selves. The process of evolution or dissolution of the world is explained in the Yoga in the same way as in the allied system of the Sāṅkhya.[1]

(*iv*) The Mīmāṁsā Theory

In the Mīmāṁsā philosophy the creation of the world is explained by the law of karma that works independently of God. It believes in the reality of the world which contains diverse physical objects including living bodies, souls, heaven, hell and deities to whom sacrifices should be performed. The forma-

[1] *Cf. Yoga-sūtra, Bhāṣya* and *Vṛtti,* 1. 23-29; 2. 32, 45; 3. 45.

tion of the world is guided by the law of karma which independently regulates the atoms to build up just the kind of world in which souls may reap the consequences of their past deeds. There is no necessity for admitting the existence of God to explain the origin of the world. In this respect the Mīmāṁsā agrees with the Sāṅkhya and propounds an atheistic theory of the world.[1]

(*v*) The Vedānta Theory of the World

Let us now consider the Vedānta theory or theories of the world. The Vedānta is the cream of the Vedic culture on its speculative side and is perhaps the ruling creed of the Hindus even to-day. There are two main schools of the Vedānta, namely, the Advaita and the Viśiṣṭādvaita. Connected with these two we find two different theories of the world which we propose to explain separately.

(*a*) The Advaita Vedānta Theory

The Advaita Vedānta gives us a monistic theory of the world. It holds that there is only one reality called Brahman which is pure existence, consciousness and bliss. This reality or Brahman has no difference and plurality within or outside it. It has not even any qualities or characters to distinguish it as one thing from other things. It is perfectly indeterminate, pure being which is of the nature of self-revealing consciousness and blissful existence. It follows that the world of many things and beings or individual souls is not ultimately real, but a mere appearance *like* an object

[1] *Cf. Ślokavārttika*, chapter on Anumāna ; *Prabhākara-vijaya*.

in dream or illusion. There is in Brahman some inscrutable power to produce the appearance of a world of many objects in the same way in which a magician makes one coin appear as many. The origin of the world lies in this magical power of Brahman, called māyā. Brahman associated with māyā is called Īśvara or God who is the creator of the world. Māyā as a power of Brahman is indistinguishable from Him, just as the burning power of fire is from fire itself. It is by this that Brahman, the Great Magician, conjures up the world-show with all its wonderful objects. Māyā has the double function of concealing (āvaraṇa) Brahman from our view and distorting (vikṣepa) Him into the appearance of a world in our mind. It is neither real nor unreal, but indescribable. Just as a magician's power of producing illusion does not deceive him, but only ignorant people who cannot see through it, so māyā, the magical power of creation, does not affect or deceive Brahman. For Him, māyā is only the will or energy to create the appearance of a world. For ignorant people like us, who are deceived by it and see many objects instead of one Brahman, māyā is an illusion-producing ignorance. In this respect māyā is also called avidyā or ajñāna and is conceived as having the double function of concealing the real nature of Brahman and making Him appear as the world. In so far as māyā positively produces the appearance of a world, it is called positive ignorance (bhāva-rūpa ajñāna); and in so far as the world has no beginning, māyā is also said to be beginningless (anādi). But just as for a discerning man who sees through the trick, the magician's wand produces no illusion, so for the wise few who are not deceived by the world-show and who

perceive in it nothing but Brahman, there is no illusion of the world, nor any illusion-producing māyā. To them, Brahman is not, therefore, the wielder of māyā at all.[1]

The creation of the world, then, is to be understood in the sense of the appearance of the world out of Brahman through its power of māyā. Brahman is both the material and the efficient cause of the world in so far as He is the only reality or substance underlying the phenomenal world and has the magical power of projecting the appearance of a world. Brahman by His magical power or māyā becomes all this that we call the world. But the modification of Brahman into the world is not real; it is only apparent. While the real modification of of any substance into another, as of milk into curd, is called pariṇāma, apparent or illusory modification of a substance, as of the rope into the snake, is called vivarta. The Advaita theory of creation is, therefore, known as vivartavāda and distinguished from the Sāṅkhya theory of evolution by real modification of prakṛti, which is called pariṇāma-vāda. It should be interpreted as a seeming evolution of the world out of Brahman through His power of māyā. In this process of evolution, at first there arise out of Brahman the five subtle elements, in the order—ākāśa or ether, vāyu or air, agni or fire, ap or water, kṣiti or earth. These five are then mixed up together in five different ways to give rise to the gross elements of those names. Each gross element is produced by the combination of the subtle elements, in the proportion of half of that element and one-

[1] *Cf. Śaṅkara-bhāṣya* on *Brahma-sūtra.*

eighth of each of the other four. This process is known as pañcīkaraṇa or combination of the five. Again, from the sāttvika part of each of the five subtle elements of ākāśa etc. arises each of the five senses of hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell ; from a combination of the sāttvika parts of the same subtle elements arise buddhi and manas ; from the rājasa parts of the subtle elements arise severally the five organs of action, viz. speech, prehension, locomotion, excretion, and reproduction ; and from a combination of the same parts arise the five prāṇas or vital breaths called prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna and samāna. The subtle body of a man consists of the five senses, five organs of action, five prāṇas, and buddhi and manas which arise out of the subtle elements. The gross body as well as all gross objects of nature is produced out of the gross elements which arise by the mixture of the five subtle ones.[1]

The evolution of the world out of Brahman through māyā is thus a process of apparent change of the subtle into the gross. Three stages are sometimes distinguished in this process of evolution. Brahman, the unchanging reality, cannot be said to be undergoing evolution. All change and evolution, therefore, belong to the sphere of māyā. It is māyā, the creative power, which at first remains unmanifested, and then becomes differentiated into subtle objects, and then into the gross ones. Brahman conceived as the possessor of the undifferentiated māyā is named Īśvara and described as omniscient and omnipotent. Brahman possessed of subtly differentiated māyā is called Hiraṇyagarbha (also

[1] *Cf. Loc. cit.*, and Sadānanda, *Vedāntasāra*, 17-45.

Sūtrātmā and Prāṇa). God in this aspect would be the totality of all subtle objects. Brahman possessed of māyā differentiated further into gross objects is called Vaiśvānara (also Virāṭ). This aspect of God is the totality of all gross objects including the jīvas or individuals. The entire process of evolution of the world, however, is, according to the Advaita Vedānta, a seeming change of the unchanging, an apparent modification of the immutable, and an imaginary superimposition (adhyāsa) of the world on Brahman.

(*b*) The Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta Theory

In the Viśiṣṭādvaita school of the Vedānta we have the theory of qualified monism. According to it, there is one ultimate reality, namely, Brahman. *But Brahman is not, as the Advaitin thinks,* a distinctionless, indeterminate reality, but the Supreme Person who contains the world of individual souls and material objects as parts of Himself. Brahman is a *unity possessed of* (viśiṣṭa) *real parts*, the conscious and the unconscious. Within Brahman, the all-inclusive God, there are unconscious matter (acit) and finite spirits (cit), both of which are uncreated and eternal. The first is the source of the material objects and as such is called prakṛti, *the root or origin of the world of objects. This prakṛti is, unlike that* of the Sāṅkhya, a part of God and controlled by God, just as the human body is controlled from within by the human soul. During the state of dissolution (pralaya) this primal unconscious matter or prakṛti remains in a latent (sūkṣma) and undifferentiated (avibhakta) form. God creates out of this the world of diverse objects in accordance with the merits and

demerits of the souls in the world prior to the last dissolution. Impelled by the omnipotent will of God, the undifferentiated subtle matter gradually becomes transformed into three kinds of subtle elements—fire, water and earth. These differentiated elements manifest also the three kinds of qualities known as sattva, rajas and tamas. Gradually the three subtle elements become mixed up together and give rise to all the gross objects which we perceive in the material world. In every object in the world there is a mixture of three elements. This process is known as trivṛtkaraṇa or triplication.[1]

According to the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, then, creation is not an apparent evolution of the world out of God through His power of māyā. It is a real fact; and the created world is as real as Brahman. But the objects of the world have no independent existence of their own. In all of them there is the same Brahman, on whom they are dependent for their existence, just as all golden ornaments are dependent on gold. It is no doubt true that God has been described in the ancient scriptures as the wielder of a magical power called māyā. But this does not mean that the world is only an appearance or illusion like the one produced by a magician. Rather, it means that the inscrutable power by which God creates the world is as wonderful as that of the magician. God has in Him a real power of creating this wonderful world (vicitrārtha-sargakarī śakti) which is, therefore, a real manifestation of His unmanifested causal nature or creative power.[2]

[1] *Cf. Śrībhāṣya,* 1. 1. 1-4; 1. 4. 8-10; 2. 1. 15, *passim.*
[2] *Loc. cit.,* 1. 1. 1.

4. *Conclusion*

These are the chief theories of the world which one finds in Hinduism. If we add to these the Cārvāka theory that the world is the product of the mechanical or fortuitous combination of the material elements by themselves without any conscious purpose or intelligent guidance, then we may say that Hinduism presents the main types of the theories of creation that have appeared in the history of philosophy and religion. But in conclusion we are to observe that all theories of creation leave us as unconvinced as before. In spite of all that has been said or done by philosophers or religious leaders of the world, the creation of the world remains a mystery for us. There are two problems that suggest themselves to the human mind as to the world. The first is: What is the ultimate ground, substance, or reality *logically presupposed* by the world? The second is: *Why or how* the world originates from what is accepted as the ultimate? The solution of the first problem is the primary business of philosophy and most of the philosophers of the world address themselves to this problem. By a critical examination of the world of experienced facts, they try to find out what is logically presupposed by it and accept it as the ultimate reality. In accomplishing this task reasoning or logic is their chief instrument and the conclusions reached by them are rational and logically justifiable. But the solution of the second problem is the business of mythology which starts with God or some other ultimate reality and gives an imaginary account of the origin of the world on the analogy of nature's or man's productive or reproductive

activities. Imagination is the chief instrument that is available in this sphere, and no logical rigour can be expected in its work. The mythological explanation of the world has always been a pastime for the human mind in all lands, as all the scriptures and legends of the world would show. Sometimes it is found intermingled also with philosophical speculation. This lends it an air of reasonableness which it would not otherwise possess. This is more or less true of the different theories of creation one finds in Hinduism. It is in this light that the Hindu theories of the world, especially the Advaita Vedānta theory, should be apprehended and appreciated.

CHAPTER V

THE DOCTRINE OF REBIRTH

1. *The Meaning of Rebirth*

Like some ancient religions of the world, Hinduism believes in the rebirth of the individual soul after death. The word *rebirth* (*punarjanma*) literally means birth after death. The idea here is that the individual soul does not cease to exist altogether at the end of its present life, but is born again in this or some other world with a new body. The idea of rebirth is expressed in Hinduism in different ways, all of which, however, agree in accepting the possibility of a future life of the individual soul at the end of its present life. Sometimes it is called *pretyabhāva* which means the being or birth of the soul after death, *i.e.* its departure from the present body. Hence rebirth is generally known as transmigration, *i.e.* migration of the individual soul from one body into another. The word 're-incarnation' which is now generally used to mean rebirth very well brings out the essential truth of the matter, namely that in rebirth the individual soul leaves one body and assumes or occupies another. A more comprehensive way of expressing the idea of rebirth is to call it *saṁsāra* which means the passing of individual souls from one life to another and from one world to other worlds.

2. *The Condition and Rationale of Rebirth*

Although the belief in rebirth is to be found in other religions, yet a philosophical justification of it is scarcely met with anywhere else than in Hinduism.

The possibility of the soul's future life and of its rebirth depends on its permanent existence. There can be no furture life or rebirth of the individual unless we believe that the soul is a reality which remains essentially permanent in spite of its changing qualities and conditions. This is the reason why materialistic and empiricist systems of philosophy, which do not believe in a permanent soul, reject the beliefs in pre-existence, after-life and rebirth of the individual soul. In some systems of Western philosophy we do find the idea of the soul's immortality and future life even. But the progress of Western science has rudely shaken men's faith in the reality of the permanent soul and thereby undermined the ideas of its future life and rebirth.. The doctrine of evolution, which has gained ground in all modern thought, has generally the effect of discrediting the idea of a permanent or eternal soul and making it appear to be an accidental product of natural elements or forces acting according to natural laws. But it is here forgotten that without the belief in souls which have a continued or permanent existence, all development or progress through evolution becomes inexplicable and, as such, evolution itself becomes meaningless. If there be no soul at all, or if the soul ceases to exist when the physical basis of its life and activity, viz. the body is destroyed, there can be no continuity between the different forms of life or between the different stages of evolution. The doctrine of rebirth as also the theory of evolution, therefore, presupposes the reality of a permanent soul for their proper justification and rational interpretation. Hinduism as a religion not only believes in the rebirth of the individual soul and its gradual

development through evolution, but also justifies the faith on the ground of a philosophical conception of the self, on its theoretical side. This will become clear from a careful and detailed study of the doctrine of rebirth, which it is the object of this chapter to make.

In Hinduism the individual soul (jīvātmā) is regarded as a permanent reality which is essentially divine in nature. Just as the sparks from a fire are indentical in nature with the fire, so the individual souls which come from God have a nature identical with God's. It is just this nature of the individual soul that justifies both the ideas of its rebirth and its gradual evolution through different births. The soul being a permanent or eternal reality, its birth and death should not be taken to mean respectively an absolute beginning and a complete extinction of its existence. Rather, we are to say that the birth of the individual soul means its connection with a new body, while its death means its dissociation from an old and worn-out body. It follows that one soul has as many births and deaths as there are occasions for it to leave one body and enter into another. These ideas have been well expressed in the *Bhagavad-gītā* in a number of verses[1] in which we are told 'that the soul being eternal it cannot be said that it never existed before or it will cease to exist hereafter; that the body of a soul is perishable, but the soul is eternal, imperishable, impregnable, unchangeable and indestructible; that just as the self of a man passes through the different stages of boyhood, adolescence and old age, so it passes from one body

[1] *Gītā*, 2. 12-13, 18, 22 ff.

to another; and that just as a man puts off an old, tattered cloth and puts on a new one, so the soul casts its old, decrepit body and finds its way to a new one'. We are further told by the same scripture 'that all souls including even that of Śrī Kṛṣṇa have had many births; but while the Lord knows them all, an ordinary soul like Arjuna has no knowledge of them.'[1]

While the soul's permanence or eternality makes rebirth possible, the essential identity of its nature with God's makes rebirth an actual and significant fact. In the Vedas, the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which constitute the primary basis of Hinduism as a religion, there are numerous passages and verses which declare that the individual soul is essentially of the same nature as Brahman or God. It is true that in some systems of Hindu thought, as also in some schools of Hinduism, we find a different view of the relation between the individual and Brahman. But the idea that the soul is essentially the same as Brahman dominates Hindu thought and religion even to the present day. We have it in the *Ṛg-veda* that "the one reality (i.e. God) is called by the wise in different ways: Agni, Yama, Mātariśvā" (ekaṁ sad viprā bahudhā vadanti);[2] and that "the Man (i.e. God) was all that is and all that will be . . . he was all that grows by food".[3] So also the Upaniṣads declare: "All this is Ātman";[4] "All this is Brahman";[5] "This self is Brahman"; "I am Brah-

[1] *Op. cit.*, 4. 6.
[2] *Ṛg-veda*, 1. 164. 46.
[3] *Op. cit.*, 10. 90.
[4] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 7. 25. 2.
[5] *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2. 2. 11; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 2. 14. 1.

man".[1] The *Bhagavad-gītā* is replete with verses which testify to the essential identity between the individual and the absolute, between jīva and Brahman. We are told here that 'God's lower nature is manifested as the physical world and His higher nature as the world of individual beings'; that 'God is the seed or germ of all living beings'; that 'the presence of Brahman in all bodies as individual selves is known as adhyātma'; and that 'God pervades the entire universe, and creates all beings out of His own nature'. We are also told explicitly in some places that 'God is present as the individual soul in the heart of every being'; that 'in all bodies He should be recognised as the kṣetrajña, i.e. the individual self who is conscious of them'; and that 'the jīva or the individual is but a part of God, which also is eternal'.[2]

The individual soul is, then, identical in essence with Brahman or God. But on account of its attachment for worldly objects it becomes embodied and so subject to births and deaths, to joys and sorrows. It is the desire for things of sense or the craving to enjoy objects that is responsible for the individual's different births in different bodies. As the *Bhagavad-gītā* puts it, 'the puruṣa or the individual soul experiences the pleasurable, painful and stupefying objects of nature (prakṛti) as and when it identifies itself with the mind-body organism, and it is just the attachment for the objects of nature that makes it liable to birth as a god, a man or an animal'.[3] It will be

[1] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 2. 5. 19; 1. 4. 10.

[2] *Gītā*, 7. 4-5, 10; 8. 3; 9. 4-8; 10. 20; 13. 1-2; 15. 7; *passim*.

[3] *Gītā*, 13. 21.

seen here that the cause for the soul's repeated births and deaths is its desire or attachment for worldly objects, which arises out of the experiences of those objects in some previous life, and that the cause or ground for these experiences is ultimately the false identification of the soul with the mind-body organism which is a product of prakṛti or primal matter. It is this avidyā or the wrong knowledge that the soul is different and separate from God and that it is the same as the mind-body, that binds the soul to the wheel of birth and death and leads it through an unending series of different lives for the enjoyment of its desired objects. As the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says: "In the vast wheel of Brahman as existence (brahmacakra), the source and support of all beings, the individual is made to wander so long as he considers himself separate from God, the ruler of all; but on realising his identity with Brahman, he attains immortality".[1] The *Bhagavad-gītā* expresses the same idea from the side of God when it says that 'God through His subservient māyā, repeatedly creates all these beings, subject to birth and death, in conformity with their previous dispositions or merits and demerits'.[2]

Although the individual soul in its ignorance forgets its divine origin and isolates itself from God, and hankers after worldly or heavenly joys, yet it is not shorn of its divine nature and cannot long remain satisfied with all the treasures of the earth or the heaven. The divine light, of which it is a flame, burns steadily within the heart of the individual

[1] *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad,* I. 6.
[2] *Gītā,* 9. 8.

being, and it is its appointed destiny to realise and manifest this divinity that lies hidden within it. 'We are sons of the Immortal Being and it is both our birth-right and divine destiny to realise the life divine and immortal'. The individual passes through births and deaths over and over again in order that it may realise its essential identity with God, and it cannot free itself from the law of birth and death until it reaches this far-off divine goal. It is just this idea that lends significance to the law of birth and death, to which all ordinary individuals are subject, and of which there would otherwise be no rationale. In view of this we are to say that birth and death, in a word, rebirth is not the fiat of a mysterious fate, but part of a divine plan or of the rational and moral order of the world.

3. *The Different Kinds of Body for the Soul's Rebirth*

Let us now consider the law of rebirth in detail. There is rebirth for the individual in order that the divinity within may become manifest without. But this is a long-drawn process and requires a long time and a graded course of training extending over many lives in many bodies of different kinds. Generally speaking, there are four kinds of gross bodies (sthūla śarīra) through which an individual soul passes in the course of evolution till it attains liberation. These are (1) plant organisms (udbhijja) like those of creepers and trees, (2) insect organisms (svedaja) like those of lice and mosquitoes, (3) ovi-born organisms or bodies produced from eggs (aṇḍaja), e.g. the bodies of birds and reptiles, and (4) vivi-born organ-

isms or bodies born out of the womb (jarāyuja), e.g. the bodies of beasts and men. There are also other kinds of bodies like the astral, etherial (taijasa), aqueous (jalīya) and so on. But these do not represent so much the stages in the evolution of the soul as the subtle bodies through which it passes from one world to another. So in addition to the four kinds of gross bodies, we may speak of another kind of body of the individual, viz. the subtle body (sūkṣma śarīra, also called liṅga śarīra). The gross body is made of the five gross physical elements and is destroyed at death. The subtle body is made of certain finer constituents like the ten sense and motor organs, the five vital breaths and the mind and intellect.[1] It passes from one gross body to another through different worlds as the vehicle for the soul's transmigration or rebirth in different bodies. The idea here is that at death the gross body of the individual soul is disintegrated, and it passes into another gross body with the subtle body of its sensibility, understanding, mental dispositions and moral character. This idea is sometimes expressed figuratively and explained with the help of certain physical analogies. Thus the *Bhagavad-gītā* says, 'when the jīva or the individual soul is born in a new body it attracts to itself the senses and the mind, and so also when it leaves an old body it goes with them, in the same way in which the wind carries the odour of flowers as it blows. It enjoys the objects of sense like sounds, colours, touches, tastes and smells, through the senses and with the help of the mind.'[2]

[1] *Cf. Vedānta-sāra*, 29-44; *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, 5. 3; *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6. 3. 1.

[2] *Gītā*, 15. 7-8.

4. *Passage of the Soul through Different Bodies in Rebirth*

In the ordinary course of evolution, the soul passes from bodies of the lowest kind to those of the highest, namely, the human. It is first born in a plant body in which there is life but apparently no consciousness. From that it passes to the bodies of amœbas and insects in which there is a higher stage of development of both its own powers and bodily functions. From this stage it enters the next higher, i.e. the bodies of oviparous animals in which there is a further development of its mental and organic form and function. And from this it rises at last to the life of viviparous animals which brings about a remarkable development of its psychical and physical constitution and function, through a long series of births in various animal bodies.

In the animal kingdom, the normal order of development is from the lowest form of life to the highest by a gradual process in which each preceding life of the soul forms the basis for the next higher, till at last it is born as a human individual. The jīva in human form manifests the three powers of cognition, desire and will which, taken together, reflect the triune nature of God who is the ultimate source from which it comes and to whom it strives to return in the course of evolution. But the evolution of the human individual does not maintain a steady upward course. There are certain set-backs at times due to the relapse of the human soul into lower forms of animal life. If a human being leads a base, immoral life, it is bound to take a retrogade step and be born as a lower animal. But in course of time and through successive rebirths,

it will once again attain the human level and continue its upward course till at last it is liberated from the chain of births and deaths.

The transmigration of the human soul from one gross body to another is not always immediate, but sometimes delayed by the contingency of its passing into some invisible world to enjoy or suffer the consequences of the deeds of its past earthly life. In such cases, the soul on leaving the gross body takes its abode in the invisible world like heaven or hell, where it remains until the merits or demerits of its earthly life are completely exhausted and the time comes for it to be born again in this world.[1] The body that sustains the soul during its passage from one gross body to another or in the invisible worlds is the subtle body with which it is associated till it is liberated. The law that governs rebirth is the law of Karma, which we shall consider in the next chapter.

[1] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4. 4. 4-6.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAW OF KARMA

1. *The Belief in an Eternal Moral Order and its Different Forms*

Hindu philosophy and religion are spiritualistic not so much because they believe in a world of spirits as that they admit an eternal moral order of the world. We find a belief in spirits as dwelling in natural objects even in the animistic faith. But for that we cannot say that animism is a form of spiritualism in the proper sense of the word. "Spiritualism", says William James, "means the affirmation of an eternal moral order and the letting loose of hope".[1] The faith in "an eternal and moral order" dominates the entire history of Indian philosophy and religion, barring the solitary exception of the atheistic materialists, viz. the Cārvākas. It is the common atmosphere of faith in which all Indian systems of philosophy and religion live and breathe. The faith in an order—a law that makes for regularity and righteousness and works in the gods, the heavenly bodies and all creatures—pervades the poetic imagination of the seers of the Ṛg-veda which calls this inviolable moral order Ṛta as contradistinguished from Nirṛti, the power of untruth and unrighteousness.[2] In some philosophical systems like the Mīmāṁsā, the idea shapes into the conception of apūrva, the law that guarantees the future enjoyment of the fruits of rituals performed now. In the Nyāyā-Vaiśeṣika philosophy, it takes the form of the

[1] *Pragmatism*, p. 107.

[2] *Ṛg-veda*, 1. 1. 8, 1. 23. 5, 1. 24. 9, 1. 123. 13.

doctrine of Adṛṣṭa, the unseen principle which sways over the material atoms and brings about objects and events in accordance with moral laws. Gradually, however, it is developed into the conception of a universal moral law, the law of Karma.

2. *The Law of Causation and of Karma*

The word 'karma' literally means action. But Karma as a doctrine or theory (karmavāda) means that all actions are governed by a law. In a narrow sense, actions are the doings of human beings. But, in a broad sense, actions mean the doings of all beings and things, human or non-human, animate or inanimate, e.g. birds, beasts, insects and even physical things. It is generally held in Western science and philosophy that the law which governs all actions and events is the universal law of causation which means that there can be no event or effect without a cause. But the law of causation has so far been limited to the physical aspect of actions and events. And it is generally held that a physical action must produce only a physical effect and that a physical effect must have only a physical cause. It is not admitted by those who believe only in the law of physical causation that moral actions also produce moral consequences like joys and sorrows, rewards and punishments. For example, it is said that a physical action like putting one's hand into the fire produces the physical effect of burning; but morally good or bad actions do not lead to any moral consequences like future happiness or misery. But this only shows that the law of causation is not universal, but limited in scope. Moral actions do

lead to certain moral consequences in the near or remote future. Just as morally good actions have a purifying, so morally bad actions have a corrupting, effect on the mind. Virtuous actions conduce to a sense of security, serenity and peace (in a word, happiness), while sinful actions plunge the mind into the ruffled waters of suspicion, distraction and uneasiness (in a word, unhappiness). More generally speaking, moral actions and their moral consequences are as good events as physical actions and their effects, and so require a rational explanation. The law that governs all actions, physical as well as moral, is the law of Karma which, therefore, is more fundamental and comprehensive than the law of physical causation. The law of Karma is the universal law of *moral causation* which guides and controls the process of an apparently physical causation, and under which physical causation may very well be subsumed.

3. *The Meaning and Rationale of the Law of Karma*

In its simplest form the law of Karma means that all actions, good or bad, produce their proper consequences in the life of the individual who acts. There is no loss of the effect of work done (kṛtapraṇāśa) and no happening of events to an individual except as the result of his or her own work (akṛtābhyupagama). This law helps us to explain the differences in the lot of individual beings, which are so striking and unexpected under the common circumstances of their lives. It is not infrequently that we find that men who are born and brought up under the same or similar circumstances

differ very much in respect of their achievements and enjoyments in life. Some men are happy and some miserable, some wise and some ignorant. We see also how some virtuous men suffer and many wicked people prosper in this world. How are we to explain these variations and anomalies in our worldly life? To say that they are accidental or due to chance is not to explain them, but to hide our ignorance under the cloak of words. If the law of causation is, as it is generally believed to be, universal and inviolable, there can be no events or effects without there being sufficient grounds or causes for them. It is only when we do not know the real cause of an effect, or the real reason for an action, that we say that the effect or the action is an accidental or chance occurrence. So we must seek for the real causes and reasons for the differences in our lot in this world. Some of them, we find, are obviously due to the different actions performed by us in the present life. But many of them cannot be explained by reference to the deeds of this life. Now if some good or bad actions are thus found to produce certain good or bad effects in the present life, it is quite reasonable to maintain that all actions—past, present and future—will produce their proper effects in this or another life of the individuals who act. The law of Karma is this universal moral law which governs not only the life and destiny of all individual beings, but even the order and arrangement of the physical world. In truth, the whole world or the universe is a moral stage, where all living beings get the dress and the part that befit them and are to act well to deserve well in future. The body, the senses and the motor organs that an individual gets and the environment

in which he finds himself are the endowments of nature or God in accordance with the inviolable law of Karma.

4. *The Three Kinds of Karma*

It should, however, be observed here that the word *karma* means both this law and the force generated by an action and having the potency of bearing fruit. *Karma* in the second sense is variously classified. According to one principle,[1] karmas are broadly divided into (*a*) those which have not yet begun to bear fruits (anārabdha karma), and (*b*) those which have already begun to bear fruits like the present body and its accompaniments (ārabdha or prārabdha karma). Anārabdha karma again can be subdivided into two classes, according as it has been accumulated from past lives (prāktana or sañcita karma) or is being gathered in this life (vartamāna, kriyamāṇa, āgāmī or sañcīyamāna karma). Karmas in the second sense are the forces generated by all our actions, which produce their proper effects in this or some other life. The law of Karma is not itself a force, but a general statement based on the facts that actions of all kinds are followed by their appropriate effects and that the sequence between actions and their effects is invariable and inviolable. This is all that the law of Karma really means and stands for in Hinduism. Like all laws of nature, including the law of natural causation, it is grounded on empirical facts. But while the law of causation is based on uncontradicted experience of natural phenomena and their order, and has the support of modern

[1] *Cf. Devī-bhāgavata*, 6. 10. 9-14; *Prakaraṇapañcikā*, p. 156.

science, the law of Karma is not securely grounded on extensive observation and scientific inquiry. But, then, the law of causation also cannot be taken as absolutely certain and unchallengeable. What is, therefore, necessary is an empirical investigation on scientific lines and methods in order to establish the validity of the law of Karma in the same sense and way in which the law of causation is proved to be valid. This is a promising field of investigation to which scholars may profitably turn their attention.

5. *Karma as the Law of all Life*

Men are born into a world governed by the moral law of Karma, and they have to abide by this law in all the spheres and phases of their life. In the life of man as a spiritual being we find three phases or aspects, namely, desire (icchā), thought (jñāna) and will (kriyā). Man is governed by the law of Karma in each and all of these aspects of life. On the side of desire, the law operates in such a way that a man finds himself in a position to realise just those objects which he desires. Desire for wealth or health puts a man in possession of the one or the other, desire for name and fame places a man in high positions in society, and evil desires lead a man to impure and ignoble objects. Similarly, a man becomes what he constantly think himself to be. The character of a man is the accumulated effect of his thoughts as expressed in deeds. It is a psychological fact that, for a sick man, to think constantly of sickness is to become all the more sick, and that the very thought 'lest I should be nervous' sometimes makes a man actually nervous. In the light of this we can understand the teaching of the *Bhagavad-gītā* when it says, 'if a

man thinks of God at the time of death he attains the Godhead, and if he thinks of some deity at that time, he attains that deity only '.[1] But here we have to bear in mind that what a man eagerly thinks of all through his life is very likely to be his last thought. That this is so is also borne out by the same scripture when it states that 'one who thinks of God at all times and keeps his mind and intellect fixed on Him, is sure to reach God; that one whose mind constantly meditates on God without any distraction attains that supreme, divine life; and that a yogin, who at the time of death meditates on the supreme Being with all his thoughts and life-energies devotionally concentrated, realises the supreme, divine existence '.[2] Just as it is the case with a man's thoughts and desires so it is with his will and acts. It is man's will and action that determine both the contingency of his birth and the circumstances of his life. Birth is not an accident, nor the caprice of a step-motherly nature and her blind, mechanical forces. It has its reasons, its causes and conditions. A man is born in this world because there is in him the will to become or the will to be born. He is born and is to live under just those circumstances of life which he deserves by his previous deeds and works. The body or family in which a person is born, the society in which he lives, and the position or station in life which he occupies, are all determined by his past conduct and behaviour. It is, therefore, both natural and rational that, as the *Bhagavad-gītā* says, 'one fallen off from the path of yoga (i.e. the religious

[1] *Gītā*, 8. 5-6.

[2] *Gītā*, 8. 7-10.

path) should be born in a noble family and of pious parents, after having spent many years in some higher invisible world and enjoyed the fruits of his previous works therein '.[1] The life of the human individual, like that of other beings, is thus governed in all its phases and aspects by the supreme law of Karma.

6. *Relation of the Law of Karma to God*

In some schools of Hindu philosophy and religion, it is believed that the law of Karma is under the guidance and control of God. The Supreme Being creates the world in accordance with the law of Karma. It is held in these systems that God as omnipotent must be above the law of Karma and that the law depends on the will of God. Further, as the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas hold, Karma as adṛṣṭa or the stock of merits and demerits of the actions of individual souls, cannot by itself lead to their proper effects, because it is an unintelligent and unconscious principle. It is God who controls our adṛṣṭa and dispenses all the joys and sorrows of our life in accordance with our karma. In some other schools of Hindu philosophy and religion like the Sāṅkhya and the Mīmāṁsā, as also in Buddhism and Jainism, the law of Karma is autonomous and works independently of the will of God. These systems hold that the origin and order of the world may be explained by the law of Karma without the supposition of a creator God.

[1] *Gītā*, 6. 41.

7. *Limitation of the Law to Interested Activity*

The law of Karma is universal in the sense that it governs all actions which are performed with a desire for the fruits thereof, i.e. which arise out of selfish motives and interests. It has thus a limited application to the world of actions done under the influence of the ordinary desires and passions of the worldly life. All actions, of which the motives are desires for certain gains here or hereafter, are governed by this law. Disinterested and passionless actions, if any, do not produce any good or bad effects in one's life just as a fried seed does not germinate and grow into a tree to bear fruits. The law of Karma, therefore, holds good for individual souls, including even gods like Brahmā, who are in bondage to this world and are swayed by the ordinary passions and impulses of life, and hanker after worldly or other-worldly gains. When, however, an individual is in a position to perform certain actions with no selfish ends in view, he becomes partially free from the influence of the law of Karma. For, such disinterested and passionless actions performed at present (vartamāna karma) do not produce any good or bad effects in one's life. They also help one to exhaust and destroy the accumulated karmas or deserts of one's past or present life, which have not yet begun to bear fruits (sañcita or sañcīyamāna karma). But one has still to reap the consequences of those karmas which have begun to bear fruit (prārabdha karma) and live in a body till they are completely exhausted. Just as a wheel goes on moving for sometime as the result of the motion already imparted to it, although further transmission

of motion to it is stopped, so an individual soul, even when free from selfish desires and actions, lives and acts in the world until his prārabdha karma is exhausted through experience of the joys and sorrows arising therefrom. A self who becomes free from selfish desires and aversions as also from ignorance and infatuation is said to be liberated. With the attainment of liberation from bondage, the self rises above the law of karma and lives and moves in an atmosphere of freedom. The liberated one may act for the good of mankind, but is not bound by his karma, since it is free from all attachment and self-interest.[1]

8. *The Law of Karma and Man's Free Will*

Certain misconceptions have gathered round the theory of karma, which require special consideration at this point.[2] Not only ordinary men, but even some scholars are of opinion that the law of Karma militates against the doctrine of free will in man, without which man cannot be held responsible for his actions, and there will be no ground for any morality. If man's present life is thoroughly governed by the law of Karma and if he is capable of attaining only those results which are destined by his previous karmas, it is not given to him to act otherwise than what he is made to do by the law, or alter in any way the course of its operation. As such, man not only loses all initiative, but is absolved from all responsibility for his actions, and becomes a helpless sufferer of the inevitable consequences of his past

[1] *Cf. Kaṭhopaniṣad,* 2. 6. 14-15; *Gītā,* 4. 19-23.
[2] *Vide* A. S. Woodburne, *The Religious Attitude,* pp. 289 f.

deeds. As against this view, we are to point out first that the law of Karma, far from denying man's free will and moral responsibility, is just based on and rightly insists upon them. If I am now to reap the consequences of my past actions, that is because I was responsible for them in the past. And if it was given to me to determine my present condition by my past conduct, there is no reason why I should not be able to determine my future by my present endeavours. But all this means that man has in him the freedom to act in certain ways in order that he may attain certain results. The law of Karma only stipulates that given such-and-such actions, such-and-such consequences are bound to follow, just as from certain physical causes and conditions certain physical effects follow of necessity. It does not paralyse a man's activities but guides them by a general command like this: 'Do this, and you will attain that end; refrain from doing this, and you will not be liable to suffer that evil consequence'. The law of Karma is not imposed on man's life by any external and irrational power like Fate or destiny. It is an internal law of our life itself, which states that man's moral actions produce certain modifications in his moral life, just as a psychological law states that man's psychical activities or experiences produce certain effects or modifications in his mental life.

Keeping this view of the moral law of Karma in mind, we are to observe next that karmas are, in a sense, forces which seem at times to be overpowering and almost impossible to overcome. But there is nothing mysterious or irrational in this. It is all but natural. It is a psychological law that a habit of action gains in force and propensity, if it is allowed

to persist and is followed for long in our life. The longer it lasts in our life, the stronger it becomes, till at last it seems to take possession of our life and hold it in thraldom. The same free will that was once concerned in acquiring that habit, now becomes powerless against it and it seems almost impossible to shake it off. But for that we are not to say that a long-standing habit is a force which deadens our will, paralyses our whole life and can never be modified or given up. It only requires a supreme effort on our part and a stronger will to get over the limitations imposed on our life by an old habit of action or of thought. Similar is the case with our karmas. They bind us in a sense no doubt. But that is just in the same sense in which old habits of action put certain limitations on our present actions. And, just as it is quite possible, though difficult, for us to uproot old habits of action, so it is possible, at least in principle, to alter and avert the consequences of our past deeds, provided we make sufficiently determined efforts with diligence and devotion.

9. *The Law of Karma and God's Omnipotence and Forgiveness*

Another misconception about the law of Karma is that the law in its theoretical aspect is inconsistent with the belief in God. If the law of Karma is, as it is sometimes said to be, a sufficient explanation for the origin and order of the world, we may very well dispense with the theistic faith in God as the creator and moral governor of the world. Further, if the law is universal and inviolable, then even God cannot override it and forgive repentant sinners and

lighten the burden of their miseries, far less, relieve them altogether. But this means that God is limited by the law of Karma and cannot, therefore, be regarded as omnipotent and absolute. To this we are to say that a law is not a force or power or an agent, but only the uniform mode of operation of a class of things, forces or agents. It does not make things act in certain ways, but expresses the way in which things act of their own nature. This being so, the explanation of the world by the law of Karma alone would be inadequate and requires to be supplemented by the belief in a supreme power which evolves the world and orders it, according to some plan and purpose which is rooted in its nature. God is this supreme power ; and the law of Karma, as a law that makes for righteousness, expresses the moral nature of God. Hence the law of Karma implies no limitation to God's power, but expresses the way in which the divine power manifests itself in the moral order of the world.[1] As for God's power to forgive sinners and help them out of misery, we are only to take a rational view of the matter. On such a view it would appear that the same moral or divine law which specifies when and how sins are committed, also provides a way of deliverance from them. God forgives our sins not without reasons. It is repentance and purification that entitle us to God's mercy and forgiveness. This means that both sin and salvation have their conditions and reasons which are constituted by different kinds of actions on our part, that is to say, both are governed by the law of Karma.

[1] *Cf.* E. W. Hopkins, *The Ethics of India*, pp. 195 f.

10. *The Law of Karma and Social Service*

It is sometimes urged against the law of Karma that in its practical aspect it discourages our moral efforts to relieve the sufferings of fellow beings. It is here contended that pursuant to the law we need not try to relieve the miseries of fellow beings, since they only reap, as they should, the fruits of their own actions. But here we are to observe that it is a fine plea for shirking one's responsibility and duty to his fellow beings. For Hinduism, God is in all living beings and non-living things, from the highest to the lowest. To serve the poor and the distressed, to relieve their pain and suffering is, therefore, to serve God. If some beings suffer because they have sinned in the past, it would be no less a sin for others not to help them, if they can; for the latter thereby refuse to serve their God as present in those suffering beings. As Svamī Vivekānanda, the Hindu monk of India, says, 'He who loves all jīvas or living beings, serves God; for in the presence of living beings we stand face to face with God in so many forms, and it is futile to search for Him elsewhere'. An English poet also expresses the same idea and sentiment in a verse as follows:

> "He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For, the great God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all."

11. *Conclusion*

The law of Karma in its different aspects may be regarded as the law of the conservation of moral

values, merits and demerits of actions. The law ensures that nothing befalls a man except as the result of his own actions and nothing merited by a man by his actions is lost unto him. All the values, positive or negative, accruing from a man's actions, remain conserved for him and are capable of bringing him joys and sorrows in this or another life. According to an eminent Western thinker, 'religion is faith in the conservation of value'.[1] It is this faith that raises Buddhism and Jainism to the status of religion in spite of the absence of a belief in God. It is, again, this faith in 'an eternal moral order' that inspires hope and confidence in man and makes him the master of his own destiny. It enables Hindu philosophy and religion to take, after all, an optimistic view of things, and treat man's present sufferings as the consequence of his own past deeds and hold out the hope of a better future for him by leading a better and nobler life at present. Thus there is in them room for free will and personal endeavour (puruṣakāra). Fatalism or determinism is, therefore, a misrepresentation of the theory of karma. Fate or destiny (daiva) is nothing but the collective force of one's own actions performed in past lives (pūrva-janma-kṛtaṁ karma). It can be overcome by efforts of this life, if they are sufficiently strong, just as the force of old habits of this life can be counteracted by the cultivation of new and opposite habits.[2] The correct attitude that we ought to take up in life is neatly expressed by an oft-quoted Sanskrit saying

[1] *Cf.* Harald Höffding, *The Philosophy of Religion*, p. 6-12.

[2] *Vide Yoga-vāśiṣṭha-rāmāyaṇa*, 2nd prakaraṇa, 4th-9th sargas for a fuller discussion.

which means: 'Fortune comes to a person who is as energetic as a lion, but cowards think that it is the gift of Fate; let us overcome this Fate by our power and make all possible personal endeavours, no blame will attach to us if our best efforts do not succeed'. The truth of the matter is that success in life depends on both our present personal endeavours and past deeds which now appear as Fate or destiny. Just as a chariot cannot move on one wheel, so Fate (daiva) without present personal endeavour (puruṣakāra) cannot lead to success.[1]

[1] *Vide Yājñavalkya-smṛti*, I. 349-51.

CHAPTER VII

THE DOCTRINE OF BONDAGE AND LIBERATION

I. *The Meaning of Bondage and Liberation*

In this chapter we have to explain the ideas of bondage and liberation which occupy an important place in Hindu philosophy and religion. The aim of both the philosophy and religion of the Hindus is, generally speaking, the attainment of mukti or liberation from bandha or bondage, for the individual soul (jīva). While some other religions like Christianity weave their faith round the ideas of an original sin and a vicarious salvation, Hinduism pins its faith on man's responsibility for the bondage of his soul and its liberation therefrom. Man is not a sinner against God by his very birth, nor is the salvation of his soul to be wrought through any vicarious atonement. Man, in his original nature, is divine, free from sin and suffering, birth and death. He is the unborn and undying spirit, the immortal and blissful self. If, still, he sins and suffers in consequence, and becomes unhappy and miserable, that is because, in his ignorance, he forgets his divine nature, separates himself from God and lives an isolated life. The root cause of the ills and evils to which we are subject in life in this world is ignorance of reality, i.e. wrong knowledge about our self and the world. While the individual soul is really different and distinct from the body, the mind and the senses, we in our ignorance confuse our self with the body and become apparently identified with the

mind-body organism. With this, we become subject to all the limitations and vicissitudes of the body. We are swayed by the passions and impulses of our organic life, and become attached to the objects of the world, which satisfy them. Out of such attachment for things pleasurable, or aversion for things painful, there arise in us all sorts of activities for obtaining or avoiding them. Now to reap the consequences of the actions of one life, under the law of Karma, we are to be born again and again until all our karmas are exhausted and we become free from birth and death. By 'bondage' is commonly meant the process of birth and rebirth and the consequent miseries to which an individual is subject. Liberation (mukti or mokṣa) means, therefore, the stoppage of this process.[1]

The process of birth and rebirth is called bondage and its cessation is called liberation because the one implies certain limitations and the other freedom from those limitations for the individual soul, just as in ordinary life and conversation a man, when under restraint, is said to be bound, and, when subsequently released from restraint, is said to be free and liberated. There is nothing in the intrinsic nature of the soul to make it liable to birth, death and rebirth, or, as a consequence, subject to sin and suffering, pain and misery. Birth and rebirth after death are rather certain restraints or limitations imposed on the nature and power of the soul on account, no doubt, of certain causes and conditions. But once the soul is subject to birth and death, it has to face the inevitable, namely, the sufferings of life. Life in the world

[1] *Cf Gītā*, 2. 51; *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1. 3. 7-8.

is full of suffering. Birth, old age, disease, death, sorrow, grief, despair, in short, the whole of our ordinary life is misery. There are, it may indeed be said, many pleasures of life as well. But for many Indian thinkers, worldly pleasures appear as such only to short-sighted people. They are fleeting like shadows, though charming like the rainbow. Their transitoriness, the pains felt on their loss and the fears felt lest they should be lost, and other evil consequences make pleasures lose their charm and turn them into positive sources of fear and care, worry and anxiety. Such being life in the world, Hinduism considers birth and rebirth to be bondage for the individual soul and seeks a way of deliverance from it.

2. *The Charge of Pessimism against Indian Philosophy and Religion*

The attitude of mind that looks at the dark side of things is known as pessimism. Indian philosophy and religion have often been labelled as pessimistic and, therefore, pernicious in their influence on practical life. How far this charge is justified with regard to Hinduism will be seen in the course of this and the following chapters. But certain general points should be noted here. If by pessimism is meant the frank admission of the reality of evil in the world and of suffering in human life, then Hinduism, like many other great religions of the world, is pessimistic. If, again, pessimism means that life as it is ordinarily led by us is not the best and that it is better to be done with this poor show of life on earth, then Hinduism is pessimistic. But this is not pessi-

mism in its true sense. Pessimism really means that attitude of the mind which finds evil in the beginning and the end of the world, and discovers no ray of hope anywhere in it, nor finds any source of consolation and inspiration within or outside it. But neither Hindu philosophy nor Hindu religion is pessimistic in this sense. It is true that they and, for the matter of that, all the Indian systems of philosophy and religion, work under a sense of discomfort at the existing order of things. They are led to develop different schools of thought and faith by a sense of spiritual disquiet at the sight of the evils that cast a gloom over life in this world. They also see through the conflicts and contradictions of our worldly life and strongly assert that life, as it is being thoughtlessly led, is a mere play of blind impulses and unquenchable desires; it inevitably ends in and prolongs misery. But neither Hindu philosophy nor Hindu religion ends by drawing this gloomy picture of life. If they point relentlessly to the miseries we suffer through ignorance and shortsightedness, they also discover a message of hope, a redeeming knowledge and a saving grace. Life is full of suffering, no doubt. But suffering has its causes and conditions, and these are to be found in man's life and his own actions. As such, it is possible to put an end to the miseries of life by the best efforts of our life; and there are several ways in which this may be accomplished. Further, on the Hindu view of life, sorrows and sufferings are not meaningless. They are not inflicted on us by a blind power like Fate or an evil spirit like Satan. Rather, they are meant for the moral education and final emancipation of the individual soul. As we have already pointed

out, the faith in an eternal moral order inspires optimism and transforms the sorrows of life into so many opportunities for moral endeavours to purify and perfect our life. For one who believes in the law of Karmà, sorrows have a greater moral value than the pleasures of life. While the latter have a tendency to corrupt the mind and deaden its higher and nobler faculties, the former act as incentives to the mind to put forth its best efforts to overcome evil and suffering. The sort of pessimism that one may find in Hinduism is thus only initial and not final. The influence of such pessimism on life is more wholesome than that of cheap optimism. For, as an eminent American writer points out, "Optimism seems to be more immoral than Pessimism, for Pessimism warns us of danger, while Optimism lulls into false security".[1]

3. *Different views of Liberation*

Although liberation commonly means the cessation of the process of birth and rebirth and of consequent suffering for an individual, yet there is difference of opinion among the schools of Indian philosophy and religion with regard to the exact nature of the state of liberation and the time when it is actually attained. The specific questions which arise here are these: Is liberation only the extinction of all existence? Or, is it a state of pure existence, or pure consciousness, or blissful conscious existence, for the individual self? Is it the soul's union and communion with God, or only its discrimination from

[1] G. H. Palmer, *Contemporary American Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 51.

the material world? Or, again, is it the individual self's realisation of its identity with God? Is it attainable by a man in this life and in this body, or only after death? If it is attainable here and now, does it imply a state of inactivity, or is it compatible with certain kinds of activity in the liberated person? All the views suggested by these questions have been held and supported by different systems of philosophy and religion in the world as also in India.

(*i*) The Nihilistic View

The view that liberation means the end or termination of an individual's existence is held by the school of nihilism (ucchedavādī)[1] which denies the reality of all things, mental and non-mental. According to it, there is no reality anywhere in the universe and the individual's salvation lies in dissipation of the illusion of the soul within and the world without, and extirpation of the will to maintain oneself in existence. As in the philosophy of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, the will to live is regarded as the root of all evils and so the best way to effect deliverance from suffering is the total negation of the will in an ascetic life, which results in the complete extinction of the individual's existence.

(*ii*) The Nyāyā-Vaiśeṣika View

In the realistic philosophy of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika[2] and the religious schools based thereon,

[1] *Vide* Mādhavācāryya's *Sarvadarśana-saṅgraha,* Ch. on Bauddha philosophy. *Cf.* also *Gītā,* 16. 8.

[2] *Vide Nyāya-sūtra* and *Bhāṣya,* 1. 1. 2 and 22; *Tarkasaṅgraha* and *Tattva-dīpikā;* pp. 106-107 (Jivānanda Vidyāsāgara's edition).

liberation means, not the extinction of the individual's existence, but the complete and final cessation of his suffering without any possibility of its return (ātyantika duḥkha-nivṛtti). It is a state in which the individual soul is released from all bonds of its connection with the body and the senses, and exists as pure unconscious substance. As such, it is neither subject to pain and misery nor capable of experiencing pleasure and happiness. There can be no no pleasure without pain, just as there can be no light without shade. Hence liberation as a state of freedom from suffering is also unrelated to any experience of happiness or bliss. It is not a state of blissful existence, but of mere substantial existence for the individual soul apart from any connection with the body and the sense organs. It is absolute freedom from pain for all time to come. It is that supreme condition of the soul which has been variously described in the Hindu scriptures as 'freedom from fear (abhayam)', 'freedom from change and decay' (ajaram), 'freedom from death' (amṛtyupadam).

It follows from the above that liberation cannot be fully attained by an individual soul so long as it is in a body and somehow connected with it. The body and the senses being there, we cannot possibly prevent their contact with unpleasant objects, and so must submit to the inevitable experience of painful feelings. Liberation is fully and finally attained through a gradual process of spiritual discipline in which the first step consists in the acquisition of right knowledge of reality, i.e. the self and the world. With this, the wrong knowledge (mithyājñāna) about the self as identical with the mind-body is destroyed

and one ceases to be moved to action (pravṛtti) by the passions and impulses of the bodily life (doṣa). When a man becomes thus free from desires and impulses, he ceases to be affected by the effects of his present actions, done with no desire for fruits. His past karmas being exhausted by producing their effects, the individual has to undergo no more birth in this world (janma). The cessation of birth means the end of his connection with the body and, consequently, of all pain and suffering (duḥkha) ; and that is final liberation (apavarga or nirvāṇa mukti). Final liberation is, therefore, attained only after death.

(*iii*) The Sāṅkhya-Yoga View

In the Sāṅkhya-Yoga philosophy[1] and the religion of yaugic asceticism, mukti or liberation means the complete and absolute cessation of all kinds of pain without a possibility of return. So far, this idea of liberation is the same as that of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. But it will be seen that it differs from the preceding conception in two important respects.

According to the Sāṅkhya-Yoga, the individual self is not a substance with the quality of consciousness, but is pure consciousness itself which is quite distinct from the body and the mind, the intellect and the ego. The self is the transcendent subject whose very essence is pure consciousness, freedom, eternity and immortality. What makes it liable to bondage and consequent miseries is the wrong identification of the self with the mind-body, more

[1] *Vide Sāṅkhya-kārikā* and *Tattva-kaumudī*, 44-68 ; *Sāṅ. pravacanabhāṣya*, 3. 65-84 ; *Yoga-sūtra* and *Bhāṣya*, 1. 3, 2.

especially, with the ego. When the self clearly realises its distinction from all these objects, it stands liberated and becomes free from all afflictions of the mind, ailments of the body, and desires and passions of the ego. What then remains is the self as it is in its essence (svarūpa), i.e. as pure consciousness (caitanya) which is the witness (draṣṭā) of all changes but is not itself involved in any change. This is a state of the individual self's existence in which there is none of the miseries to which the soul in bondage is subject. Here the self ceases to be affected by the vicissitudes of the body and the mind, and rests in itself as the mere witness of physical and psychical changes. It is possible for the individual self to attain this perfect state of liberation in this life and in this world. This kind of liberation is called jīvanmukti or emancipation of the soul while living in this body. After the death of its body, the liberated self attains what is called videhamukti or emancipation of the spirit from all bodies, gross or subtle. This ensures absolute and complete freedom from all sufferings for all time to come. But it is only the absolute cessation of all kinds of misery, and not a state of joy or happiness. Where there is no pain, there can neither be any pleasure, because the two are relative and inseparable.

(*iv*) The Mīmāṁsā View

In the early Mīmāṁsā philosophy and religion, the highest goal of human life appears to have been heaven (*svarga*) which is a state of unalloyed bliss that can be attained hereafter by performing here the Vedic rites. But the later Mīmāṁsakas agree

with the other Indian thinkers in accepting mokṣa or liberation from bondage to the body as the highest good (niḥśreyasa). They realise that the performance of actions, good or bad, with a desire for enjoyment of objects leads to repeated birth. All objects of the world, however, are inseparable from pain of some kind. He who understands this, tries to control his passions and gives up the desire for the fruits of actions. With this his actions do not tend to cause rebirth. Through the disinterested performance of obligatory duties and knowledge of the self, he also gradually exhausts the karmas accumulated in the past. Such a man, being free from all karma-ties, is never born again. He is thus finally liberated. As bondage is the fettering of the soul to the world of objects through its connection with the body, liberation is the termination of such bondage through the stoppage of rebirth.[1]

With regard to the nature of the state of liberation we find two different views among the Mīmāṁsakas. According to some Mīmāṁsakas,[2] since in liberation the soul is freed from its connection with the body, the senses and the mind, it cannot have any consciousness; nor can it, therefore, enjoy bliss. Liberation is desirable not as a state of bliss, but as the total cessation of painful experience. It is a state where the soul remains in its own intrinsic nature as a substance with the potentiality of consciousness, but no actual consciousness. It is, therefore, a state in which there is neither pain nor pleasure, nor any specific

[1] *Vide Prakaraṇa-pañcikā*, prakaraṇa, 8.

[2] Pārthasārathi Miśra and his followers. *Cf. Śāstra-dīpikā*, pp. 125-31.

quality in the soul. But some other Mīmāṁsakas[1] go further and hold that in liberation there is not only the cessation of all pain but also a manifestation of eternal bliss. Hence liberation is an experience of eternal bliss for the individual self. This conception of liberation seems to be in complete agreement with the Vedānta view which we would consider next.

(v) The Advaita Vedānta View

The Vedānta is at once a philosophy and a religion. It has been, and will ever remain, a stronghold of spiritualism in life and philosophy. It is like one of "the great living wells, which keep the freshness of the eternal, and at which man must rest, get his breath, refresh himself". The Advaita Vedānta is at one with some other Indian systems in maintaining that liberation is the manifestation of eternal bliss and is attainable by man in this life, and that it is not incompatible with activity or work without attachment (niṣkāma karma). But there is some difference of opinion among the different schools of the Vedānta with regard to the time when liberation is actually attained, and the form of manifestation and way of attainment of eternal bliss in liberation.

The Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara[2] and his followers holds that the individual self is, in reality, identical with Brahman or God. It is māyā or ignorance that conceals this truth from his view and makes him appear as a little individual being, an

1 Sucarita Miśra, Bhaṭṭasarvajña and others. *Vide* Mādhavācārya, *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha*, Chapter on Akṣapāda system.

2 *Vide* Śaṅkara's *Bhāṣya* on *Brahma-sūtra*, 1. 1. 1, 1. 1. 4; and on *Bhagavad-gītā*, 3. 20-26, 4. 14.

ego or 'I' which is identical with the body and is different and separate from God. This constitutes the soul's bondage. The study of deep, dreamless sleep gives us a glimpse of what the self really is when dissociated from its feeling of identity with the body. The soul in its intrinsic nature is not a finite, miserable being. It does not separate itself from the rest of existence and limit itself by a feeling of the 'I' (aham) and exist as the ego (ahaṅkāra). It is also free from all worries and troubles that arise from hankering after objects. The self is, then, really unlimited consciousness and bliss. The fact that the blissful state of dreamless sleep is not permanent and man returns again to his limited and unhappy consciousness on waking up, shows that even in deep sleep the forces of karma or avidyā persist in a latent from. Unless these forces, accumulated from the past, can be completely stopped, there is no hope of liberation from the miserable existence which the self has in this world. What is necessary for this is the study of the Vedānta with discrimination (viveka), detachment (virāga), self-control (śamadamādi), and an ardent desire for liberation (mumukṣutva). The method of this study consists of the three-fold process: listening to the teacher's instructions (śravaṇa), understanding the instructions through reasoning until all doubts are removed and conviction is generated (manana), and repeated meditation on the truths thus accepted and understood (nididhyāsana). Through a sufficiently long and devoted study of the Vedānta in this way, there is the direct realisation of the truth that the individual self is identical with Brahman. Thus the false distinction between the self and Brahman at

last disappears, and bondage too, along with it. Liberation (mukti) is thus attained. Now liberation is not merely the absence of all misery that arises from the illusory sense of distinction between self and God. It is conceived by the Advaita Vedānta, after the Upaniṣads, as a state of positive bliss. For, liberation means identity of the self with Brahman, and Brahman is infinite, eternal bliss. On the attainment of liberation, a man may continue to live in this body which is the product of karmas which have already begun to bear fruits (prārabdha-karma). He may also act in this world in a dispassionate and disinterested spirit for the good of mankind, for the liberation of suffering humanity. Still, he is not bound by his karma nor affected by the world's misery, because he does not feel any desire for the world's objects. He is in the world and yet out of it. He thus attains what has become well-known in later Vedānta as jīvan-mukti (the liberation of one while he is alive). After the death of his body, he enters into the state of what is known as videha-mukti (liberation of one released from all bodies). Here the Vedāntins have the support of the Bauddha, Jaina, Sāṅkhya and some other Indian thinkers, who also believe that perfection can be reached even here in this life.

(*vi*) The Viśiṣtādvaita Vedānta View

The Viśiṣtādvaita school of the Vedānta, founded by Rāmānuja,[1] however, holds that man's liberation does not consist in the realisation of his identity with God, but in his loving recognition of God as the Lord

[1] *Vide Srībhāṣya,* I. I. I, I. I. 4 and 4th Pāda, 4th Adhyāya.

of all and in his blessed communion with the divine. It is unthinkable that man who is finite can be identical with God in every respect. Man is not absolutely different from God in so far as God pervades man and controls him from within, like every other thing. He is related to God as a part to the whole, or as the body to our soul. But there cannot be an absolute identity between man and God. Man has a real body and a soul. The bondage of the soul to the body is due to its karma. As the result of its karma, it identifies itself with the body and regards the body as itself. Liberation from bondage must be sought through work and knowledge, for they conduce to the attainment of devotion to God, the supreme Lord. The performance of religious works without any desire for reward purifies the mind, and a critical study of these works in the light of the Mīmāṁsā enables a man to see through the transient nature of the fruits they produce. With this a man is persuaded to the study of the Vedānta from which he learns that God is the Lord of all and that he is not identical with the body but is a part of God. He learns also that liberation can be attained, not by 'study and reasoning', but only through God's grace which is bestowed on one who is sincerely devoted to God and constantly remembers or meditates on Him. Such devout meditation leads to the direct experience or realisation of God. One who thus realises God is liberated from the body for ever, without any chance of rebirth. But liberation is not the soul's becoming identical with God. The liberated soul having pure consciousness becomes similar to God (brahma-prakāra) who also is pure, blissful consciousness. The liberated one is not lost in identity with God, but

being free from ignorance and bondage of every kind, he enjoys, in perfect love and wisdom, the bliss of perpetual communion with God. But this goal he actually reaches only after death. Thus Rāmānuja does not recognise jīvan-mukti as Śaṅkara does.

4. *Conclusion*

The ideas of bondage and liberation seem to be peculiar to the Hindu, or more generally speaking, Indian philosophy and religion. For almost all the Indian systems of philosophy and schools of religion, liberation (mukti) is the ultimate end of human life. Generally speaking, they recognise four values or ends of man's life (puruṣārtha), namely, wealth (artha), enjoyment (kāma), virtue (dharma) and liberation (mokṣa). But of these, liberation is the highest end, and the other ends are to be sought for and attained as means to the final end of liberation. The reason for this is to be found in the Hindu conception of the individual self (jīvātmā). It is the absence of this conception in Western philosophy that explains why there is no elaborate treatment in it of the subject of liberation in the Indian way and also why the idea of liberation in the Indian sense appears so strange to the Western mind.[1] On the Hindu view the individual self is an eternal and immutable reality which is quite distinct from and independent of the body and mind with which it may be associated for the time being. All the miseries to which it is now subject arise out of its association and identification with a

[1] The nearest approximation to the Hindu idea of bondage and liberation is perhaps to be found in the philosophy of Plato and of Plotinus in the history of Western philosophy.

particular mind-body, and this constitutes its bondage to the world. There is, therefore, nothing in the intrinsic nature of the individual soul that makes it liable to sin and suffering, pain and misery. Rather, the soul in its original nature is divine ; it is the pure, immaculate spirit, which is free and blissful in its essential nature. Liberation of the individual soul means, therefore, the recovery of its original nature, the restoration of its pristine glory. When the self attains liberation, no change takes place in it and no new property or quality accrues to it. Liberation or freedom of the self does not mean its development from a less perfect to a more perfect condition, nor does it mean the production of anything new. It is, rather, the clear realisation of the soul's real nature—a nature which it always possesses, but in its ignorance sometimes forgets. Liberation is, then, not a future possibility or an uncertain contingency only for the individual soul, which may or may not be ever realised. Nor is it, as some Western thinkers and preachers suppose it to be, the lot of this and that man only, or this and that race only, to enjoy the blessings of liberation. This is the idea of "conditional immortality" which is not countenanced in Indian philosophy and religion. Men are essentially divine in nature, they are all sons of the Immortal. It is their birth-right and destined goal to realise the divinity that lies hidden in them and attain the perfect state of liberation, be it in this life or some other life in the remote future. The world being a moral order after all, what we expect to find in it is a course of evolution which makes for the perfection of all beings and their final liberation. What the natural course of liberation for man is, will appear from the next chapter

CHAPTER VIII

THE NATURAL COURSE OF LIBERATION: VARṆĀŚRAMA DHARMA

1. *The Fundamental Contradiction in Human Life*

As we have already pointed out, man is, in his essential nature, pure, free and immortal. But in his ordinary worldly life he seems to be impure, fettered and mortal. That all men are mortal is a commonplace of logic and philosophy. That he is impure and sinful by birth is believed in some widely accepted religions. And that he suffers from various limitations, and smarts under a sense of disability and incapacity is a common fact of our experience of life in this world. There is, as it were, a fundamental contradiction in human life. Man has a body that binds him to this world with an iron chain made of hunger, thirst, and sensual appetites. He has a mind that has a natural impulse towards carnal pleasures and worldly goods, and is swayed by desire, hatred and infatuation. But there is in him a soul that refuses to be laid low with the burden of the body, or be lost in the maze of natural impulses and passions of the mind. Man's spirit wants to soar high above the limitations of the body-mind, breathe the pure atmosphere of freedom, unfettered by its bodily and mental limitations, and realise its destined goal in the life divine, i.e. attain liberation from bondage.

2. *Liberation and the Law of Evolution*

If it is man's destiny to attain liberation, there is a natural course of development in him that leads

to this state. This may be called the natural course of liberation. In modern times, the process of the world's development from a less to a more perfect state till the most perfect is reached is known as evolution. According to the law of evolution, there is a gradual process of development of the world from matter to life, from life to mind, and from mind to the world of individual selves or finite persons. Many Western thinkers are of opinion that this process of development is entirely mechanical and fortuitous, that it is out of dead and unconscious matter that life, mind and individual souls are produced, and that these are reduced to matter when an individual dies.[1] There are other Western thinkers who hold that the process of evolution is not a blind mechanical process, but a rational and intelligent course of development through which God realises a moral order of the world constituted by many finite selves who are relatively free and responsible beings. This is the theistic interpretation of evolution in Western philosophy. But even here it is not held that the human soul is essentially free, immortal, and divine in nature and that it is destined to realise its unity or identity with God through a series of births and deaths. Generally speaking, the Western theists are of opinion either that after death finite souls pass into 'a final and irrevocable state of existence in a so-called unseen and eternal world', or that of finite souls only those who have acquired some value through self-development are preserved by God, while others are for ever lost. In Hinduism, however, it is believed that all

[1] Among Indian thinkers, the Cārvākas who are materialists also accept the same view.

individual souls are by nature eternal and indestructible, and that all of them are bound to be liberated through a gradual process of development from life to life and from body to body. There is, therefore, a natural course of liberation for all individual souls.

3. *The two Paths of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti*

There are two stages in the course of liberation. These are described as the paths of pravṛtti or progression and nivṛtti or renunciation, and are regarded as continuous with one another. The first is a movement of the soul in the direction of desired objects, or its tendency *towards objects of enjoyment*. It is a sort of outgoing activity of the soul, or an outwardizing of its subjective being, and is a necessary preliminary stage in its evolution and liberation. The other is apparently a tendency of the soul away from objects, and towards its own subjective being. It is an inward-directed activity of the self and an inwardization of its subjective being. It does not, however, require one to renounce the world, but to renounce worldliness or attachment to the world. Nivṛtti is thus really renunciation in spirit and not necessarily in action and practice.

The individual soul living in a body ordinarily thinks and feels itself to be embodied. And it considers itself and is also considered by others to be *somebody* who has a name and belongs to a caste and passes through the stages of childhood, youth and old age. The individual soul thus considers itself to be identical with the body with which it is associated for the time being. This sense of its identity with a body is really false ; but so long as it is there in the soul it is subject to all the limitations of its bodily

abode. Hence it is that the soul hankers after pleasures of the body and tries to satisfy its sensual and instinctive cravings. For the education and emancipation of a soul thus conditioned by the body, the best course is, by no means, the suppression of the natural appetites, impulses and passions of the mind-body, but a reasonable and rational satisfaction of them through a regulated life of intercourse with and enjoyment of the objects of the world. Such a life is called the life of pravṛtti, and as a stage in the gradual development of the individual soul, it is known as the pravṛtti-mārga. It is the path of enjoyment and progression towards the desirable objects of this or the other world.

The Hindu scriptures give us a definite and detailed plan of the path of pravṛtti or enjoyment, so that by following it, the individual soul may develop its potential powers and attain its destined goal, namely, liberation. The individual soul is a spark from the divine fire and has an innate attraction for it. Just as the planets thrown off from the sun move round it, so the individual soul moves round the centre of its being throughout its earthly sojourn, till at last it finds itself in God. Hence in continuation of the path of pravṛtti is laid down the path of nivṛtti, the world-ward movement is followed by the God-ward movement, and the worldly life of enjoyment leads us to the spiritual life of renunciation. It is, therefore, quite natural that in the full course of development of the individual soul there should be the two stages of pravṛtti and nivṛtti, of enjoyment and renunciation.

4. *The Four Ends of Human Life*

The individual soul in its embodied state has a gross and a fine body. Of these the first is made of the five gross elements and the last is constituted by the five senses of knowledge, the five senses of action, the five prāṇas or vital powers, the mind and the intellect. Then, the individual lives in a society of many individuals and has his rights and duties in the social polity. Constituted as he is by both the earthy and the divine element of body and spirit, attracted as he is by the kindred points of heaven and earth, and situated as he is in a society of fellow beings, he cherishes four main ends of life (puruṣārtha), namely, kāma or enjoyment, artha or wealth, dharma or virtue, and mokṣa or liberation. Being associated with a body with which it is seemingly identified, the individual soul desires such objects as are congenial to the body and hates such others as are uncongenial to it. The attainment and enjoyment of desirable objects thus become one of the steadfast ends of its life. But it finds the enjoyment of pleasurable objects in the complex social structure under which it has to live, to be dependent upon the acquisition of property and wealth, of power and position in social life. Hence it is that as a means to enjoyment, wealth becomes the second end and objective of the individual's life. Now both the possession and enjoyment of wealth are made possible for the individual in a stable order of society which imposes certain laws of good conduct and social behaviour on all its members. It is the moral duty of every individual member of that society to follow those laws in his conduct, and therein lies a great

virtue for the individual member. Dharma or virtue thus becomes the third end of man as a social being. But the individual soul cannot remain contented with the attainment of these ends of life, even though they may include the finest enjoyments like heavenly joy. For all these are meagre and short-lived, and so he is in relentless search for some good which is final and eternal and is in that sense the highest good of our life. This he finds in liberation from all sin and suffering, and recognises it as the *summum bonum* of human life. These four kinds of objects are generally regarded as the four ends sought for by every individual self (puruṣārtha).

5. *The Four Āśramas or Stages of Life*

Having regard to the fundamental needs of individual human souls and for the realisation of their highest ends, Hinduism elaborates the Varṇāśrama-dharma for their proper education and development in this life. This dharma or code of life covers both the pravṛtti and the nivṛtti mārga, the paths of enjoyment and renunciation. It is at once a natural and rational course of development in so far as it is based on the different stages in which nature herself divides the life of man in this world and has a close reference to his inborn and acquired talents and temperaments, or his different bodily and mental endowments. Every individual soul or human being born in this world passes through four stages of development in life, excluding childhood, namely, youth, manhood, middle age[1] and old age. Similarly,

[1] This is the age of retirement from active life and is said to begin after the fiftieth year of one's life. For want of a better expression, we have called it 'middle age', as distinguished from later old age.

a man is born and brought up in one or other section and class in the social polity. So we require a code which makes provision for the regulation of the individual's life at its different stages and positions in society. Thus we have the four stages in the development of the moral life of the individual person. These are described as the stages of Brahmacaryya or student life, Gārhasthya or family life, Vānaprastha or retired life, and Sannyāsa or life of renunciation, a dedicated life. So also man's society is ordered into four strata or ranks which were originally only four professional classes, like the three classes of the State (Guardians, Auxiliaries and Producers) which we find in Plato's *Republic*. But subsequently they hardened into four castes with many sub-castes under each of them and some mixed castes between them. These are called the classes of Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra. The duties and responsibilities which pertain to each of these stages and strata of life, according to the Hindu code of Varṇāśrama, we shall now consider.

(*i*) Brahmacaryya or Student Life

The first stage (aśrama) in the moral life of the individual is Brahmacaryya or the student's life. At a certain age, which varies from five years to eight for the different castes, a boy is initiated into the spiritual life through impartation of the Gāyatrī mantra, attended with certain religious rites. Then he is committed to the care of his teacher with whom he lives, away from his parents, till the end of his student career. Here he lives the life of the brahmacārin which primarily means a life of self-control and continence, devoted to the study of the different arts

and sciences. In many respects the student's life under the Hindu scheme of Varṇāśrama is found to anticipate the Platonic ideal of education for the class of Guardians and Auxiliaries. Like them, the Hindu brahmacārins are to live an austere, hardy, frugal life in the teacher's āśrama or a hermitage, supported by contributions collected from the house-holders living in villages nearby. Along with the study of different śāstras or branches of knowledge he has to build up a strong body by taking manly exercises and by training in the art of war including archery, riding, driving and other feats of skill. He should devote some part of his time to prayer and worship, some to begging food for himself and his teacher and otherwise serving him, and the rest to study and sleep. He must observe the laws of temperance in every respect. He should also refrain from using articles of luxury, indulging in effeminating pursuits like singing and dancing, and from telling lies, engaging in idle gossip, slander and other bad habits. In short, chastity, temperance, simplicity, hardiness and devotion to knowledge and to God are the chief marks of the student's life.[1] A life thus lived gives youth the bodily and mental equipments necessary for the due discharge of the responsibilities of the next stage, namely, the life of a householder.

(*ii*) Gārhasthya or Family Life

It is a general rule for all men to enter on the householder's life on the completion of his education at the teacher's abode and his return home. For every youth, to marry and shoulder the responsibili-

[1] *Cf. Manu-smṛti*, 2. 54 ff.

ties of the family life on the attainment of maturity, is neither a luxury nor an option. It is the sacred duty of a normal individual who has attained manhood to take a wife and to have children, and live the life of a householder so as to be in a position to pay his debts to the gods, his ancestors, teachers, fellow men and other living beings. In fact, the householder's life, lived in conformity with Varṇāśrama rules, is extolled in Hinduism as the highest and most useful order of life. For, not only the well-being but even the existence of the other orders like brahmacaryya, vānaprastha and sannyāsa, depends on the due performance of the duties of a householder's life.[1] In Hinduism, the institution of marriage is not meant for sensual gratification only. Far from this being so, it is a religious order of life in which one has to look upon one's wife as a partner in co-operative socio-religious endeavours to work out one's salvation. So also the wife looks upon herself as a partner in the husband's religious life (sahadharmiṇī). Similarly, for the children of a married couple, the highest virtue is filial piety and not the one-sided assertion of rights without duties to parents, nor a merely formal performance of some duties to parents as a matter of option or favour. For Hinduism, marriage is a highly useful social institution which should be sanctified by religious solemnities and rationally regulated by a code of chastity, temperance and self-restraint so as to prevent all kinds of excess, adultery and frustration which mar the peace and happiness of a married life or obstruct its fruition.

[1] *Cf. Manu-smṛti*, 3. 77.

A householder is in duty bound to perform daily the five great yajñas or sacrifices, namely, the deva-yajña, pitṛ-yajña, ṛṣi-yajña (also called brahma-yajña and veda-yajña), nṛ-yajña or manuṣya-yajña and bhūta-yajña. Of these, the first requires him to pray to and worship God or the gods in some form or other and thus receive His or their grace. The second calls upon him to offer oblations (tarpaṇa) to his departed forefathers in order to propitiate them and bring their blessings upon him. The third insists upon his daily duty of studying the works of the ancient sages, like the Vedas, Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The fourth and the fifth sacrifice require him to serve his fellow-beings and even birds, beasts and insects by performing different acts of charity like giving alms and feeding the poor, excavating wells and tanks (pūrta), founding and financing schools and hospitals, and offering some food to the lower animals, domestic or otherwise. In this connection, hospitality to friends, relatives and all other guests is considered to be the most sacred duty of a householder ; and in this he must not fail, whatever may be the magnitude of self-sacrifice he has to make in this regard. Instances of a householder sacrificing his own child for the satisfaction of his honoured guest are indeed rare, but they are not few in the ancient and mediaeval history of India. It is also one of the chief duties of a householder to accumulate some wealth, own some property like house, land and cattle, in order to do his duty to his family, society, nation and country. These he should have, not for their own sake like a miser, nor for the sake of himself and his family only like a selfish hedonist, but for the service of man and God as much as for

himself and his family. Thus the special virtues of a householder are hospitality, charity, industry, honesty, frugality, temperance, devotion to religion and social service.

(*iii*) Vānaprastha or Retired Life

The first and second āśramas or stages of life complete the path of pravṛtti or desire and enjoyment for the training of the individual soul. On due fulfilment of the duties and responsibilities which pertain to the gārhasthya or family life one is fit to enter on the next two stages which constitute the path of nivṛtti or renunciation. It is after one has manfully and assiduously discharged the duties of a householder and attained the fiftieth year of his life that one should live a retired life either in the forest or some secluded place suited to modern conditions. This is the stage of vānaprastha or retired life which follows on the preceding stage and is preparatory to the next and final stage of sannyāsa. At this stage a man's duty is to serve the world by means of prayer and sacrifice. He is, therefore, to continue the performance of the five daily sacrifices and engage in other kinds of sacrifice as well. The duties of a man at this stage are sacrifice, constant study of the Veda, austerity and equanimity, amity, readiness to give and not to take anything, love and compassion for all living beings.[1]

(*iv*) Sannyāsa or Life of Renunciation

The ascetic life of a recluse leads naturally to the last stage of sannyāsa in which a man renounces

[1] *Cf. Manu-smṛti*, 6. 8.

in spirit everything of the world, including even sacrifices, and rests calmly in God, ever meditating on Him. He becomes free from attachment to all objects including his body, senses and life, attains perfect equanimity of mind, and having realised Brahman or God, renounces all worldliness, so as to remain content with and concentrated in the self that is within him.[1] Such a soul stands liberated from all bondage to the world, even when he is in this body and in this world, engaged in disinterested activities for the moral uplift of humanity in its entirety.[2] As we have it from the *Bhagavad-gītā*, he who performs all actions as are his duties without a desire for their fruits, is the true sannyāsī and yogi as well, and not one who shirks his duties like sacrifices, rites and social service.[3]

6. *The Four Varṇas in Hindu Society and the classes in Plato's Ideal State*

So much for the āśramas or stages of life. Now we come to the varṇas or classes in Hindu society. There are four classes in it, namely, the Brāhmaṇas, the Kṣatriyas, the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras. It should be observed at the very outset that, like the three classes in the ideal State depicted in Plato's *Republic*, these classes are determined, not by birth and heredity alone, but by the natural gifts and endowments, the vocations and professions of the members constituting them. This point has been clearly emphasised in the Hindu śāstras, but strangely

[1] *Cf. Manu-smṛti*, 6. 43-49; *Gītā*, 18. 2, 49.
[2] *Cf. Gītā*, 18, 53 ff.
[3] *Cf. Gītā*, 6. 1; 18. 5-12.

enough, it has been all but forgotten. The result is that in place of four different professional classes we have now a number of castes with innumerable sub-castes in the Hindu body politic, and that, much to the detriment of its unity, strength and solidarity. The *Bhagavad-gītā* makes this abundantly clear when it says that the four varṇas were constituted on the principles of guṇa, i.e. natural and acquired qualities or characters, and karma, i.e. calling and profession (*Gītā* 4. 13). This makes it permissible for us to place an individual member of the society in one or other class, according to his qualifications and irrespectively of his pedigree, and even to transfer an individual from one varṇa to another in view of any marked change in his character or profession or both. For this we have the authority of the Hindu śāstras or scriptures as well as many historical precedents. Instances of a kṣatriya rising to the status of a brāhmiṇ, or of brāhmiṇs being degraded into the class of śūdras are not wanting in the ancient history of the Hindus.[1] So also we are told by the śāstras that every one is a born śūdra, but is reborn as a brāhmiṇ or kṣatriya or vaiśya through training and culture; that 'the varṇa or caste of man is determined, not by birth but by qualifications, so much so that a man should be designated by the caste indicated by his character even if he happens to be born in a different caste; that one who has not the requisite qualifications for it, is a brāhmiṇ only in name, just as a wooden elephant or a leather deer only bears the name of 'elephant' or 'deer'; that

1 *Vide Rāmāyaṇa*, Bāla-kāṇḍa, 57-65; *Mahābhārata*, Anuśāsana-parva, 30; *Viṣṇu-bhāgavata*, 9. 21. 19 ff.

a brāhmiṇ becomes a śūdra in this life if he does not study the Vedas and serves as a labourer elsewhere ; and that a śūdra becomes a brāhmiṇ by sheer merit, and so also a kṣatriya or vaiśya'.[1] All this should make it abundantly clear that originally there were no castes but only professional classes in the Hindu society, and that the present caste system in it only illustrates how the spirit of every social system degenerates into hard and fast forms through accidental accretions of time and place. If there is urgent need of reform anywhere in Hinduism, it is in regard to the social structure with its innumerable castes which are like so many barriers dividing the Hindus into so many warring camps. What we want now is a restoration of their social system to its original structure with only four social ranks or strata, namely, those of brāhmiṇs, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras. Under modern conditions of life these may be re-established so as to make them correspond to the three classes recognised in Plato's *Republic*, of course, with such modifications as would make them suited to the genius and culture of the Hindus.

The Hindu scriptures declare that, of the four classes, the Brāhmiṇs emanate from the mouth of God, the Supreme Person, the Kṣatriyas from His two arms, the Vaiśyas from His two thighs, and the Sūdras emanate from His two feet.[2] This reminds one of the rule laid down by Plato in his *Republic* to tell all the citizens of the State 'a story, to the

[1] *Manu-smṛti*, 2. 157, 168 ; 10. 65 ; *Viṣṇu-bhāgavata*, 7. 11. 35 and Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary on it.

[2] *Ṛg-veda*, 10. 90. 12 ; *Manu-smṛti*, 1. 87.

effect that they were all originally fashioned in the bowels of the earth, their common mother ; and that it pleased the gods to mix gold in the composition of some of them (the Guardians), silver in that of others (the Auxiliaries), iron and copper in that of others (husbandmen and craftsmen) '. In both cases, however, the underlying idea is that in the social scale those who stand higher have higher qualifications than those who are placed lower. That the social scale in Hinduism has a close reference to the merits and virtues of the different classes will become clear when we consider their special qualifications. What these qualifications or characteristic virtues of the four varṇas or classes are we shall now consider.

7. *The Duties and Virtues of the Four Varṇas or Classes*

The duties and virtues of the four classes, as detemined by their innate dispositions or natural tendencies, are delineated as follows.[1] The natural qualities of a Brāhmiṇ are : self-restraint, austerity, purity, serenity, forgiveness, simplicity, wisdom in the holy lore, faith in God and the śāstras, and philosophic insight into Truth and Reality. He must study and teach the Veda, offer sacrifices and guide others to do so, make gifts to and receive gifts from others. Anyone possessing these qualities is to be recognised and respected as a Brāhmiṇ. From the ancient times down to the present age, the Hindu society has not failed in its duty to honour and adore a true Brāhmiṇ wherever he may be found and

[1] *Cf. Gītā,* 18. 41-44 ; *Manu-smṛti,* 1. 88-91.

whatever may be his actual position in the society of his time.

Of the Kṣtriya, the natural qualities are: courage, strength, firmness, skilfulness, undauntedness in battle, charitableness and administrative ability. It is his duty to protect the State and its people, to contibute liberally for the good of others and also for nation-building institutions, to study the Veda and perform Vedic rites, and to own riches without, however, any attachment to them.

The Vaiśya must possess such qualities as dexterity in agriculture and protection of cattle, and in trade, banking and commerce. He should also be engaged in Vedic study and Vedic rituals, and render liberal help to the poor and the needy and also to all good causes.

The fourth class is the class of Śūdras. Their great merit and virtue lie in service to the other classes of society. They are the labourers and builders of the State and should have a full sense of the dignity of labour, in whatever form it may be. Although they may be despised at times by some members of the society, one thing that we should always remember is that the labouring class is the foundation of the social structure, the life-blood of the body politic ; and we should regulate our conduct in relation to them accordingly.

8. *The Idea of Svadharma as the Highest Moral Ideal*

When we combine the duties and virtues that pertain to one's varṇa or class and āśrama or stage of life, we get the idea of one's svadharma which is

regarded as a man's highest duty and virtue. The idea of svadharma occupies the most important place in Hindu Ethics. It corresponds substantially to the conception of the moral ideal as 'one's station in life and its duties,' as that is explained by some Western thinkers. *In Hinduism the conception of svadharma gives us the highest moral ideal which every man should try to follow in his life.* The perfection of the moral life is attained by a man through due performance of all those duties which pertain to his position in society and to the particular stage of his life. So far as the first stage of brahmacaryya or student life is concerned, there is not much to distinguish between the duties of one class and those of another class. We may here say that it is the duty of the youths of all the classes to receive the same type of training and education from a certain age till the attainment of maturity. Whatever may be the class to which he belongs, no youth should embark on the enterprise of a householder's life without previous education in the important branches of learning and proper training of the body and the mind. At the subsequent stages of life, however, the due performance of the duties that pertain specially to a particular class is regarded as the highest virtue of a man belonging to that class. Thus for a Brāhmiṇ the highest virtues are the study and teaching of the Veda, observance of simplicity and austerity in life, devotion to and worship of God, and the like. So too, a man who belongs to the class of Kṣatriyas, or Vaiśyas, or Śūdras should perform assiduously all the duties prescribed for that class ; and therein lies his highest virtue, his *summum bonum.*

9. *The Concept of Adhikāra in Hindu Philosophy and Religion*

The idea of svadharma is connected with the correlative notion of adhikāra or spiritual status as found in both the Hindu religion and philosophy. The idea here is that men are born with a certain disposition and character, talent and temperament, although these are subject to modification by training and education. Hence it is that every man is not considered fit for everything, but only for that kind or mode of life which suits his innate and acquired capacities. To ascertain svadharma or one's own duties, therefore, we must take into consideration the natural gifts and acquired capacities of a man, so that he is not burdened with the responsibilities of a mode of life which he is not fit to shoulder, for that is not only futile but positively injurious as well. The dharma or moral ideal is not the same for all persons. It should be as many as there are types of personality or classes of moral beings. Herein lies the rationale of the Hindu code of varṇāśrama dharma. This code takes into consideration the realities of man's life, the apparent variations in man's nature and the obvious necessity of prescribing the right thing for the right man at the right time and place, instead of casting all minds into the same mould, which is as bad as putting round pegs into square holes, if not worse.

Now we are in a position to understand why a man's varṇāśrama dharma is declared to be his svadharma. We may call it one's self-appointed duty, or nature-appointed duty, or God-appointed duty, just as we please. But in all cases the meaning

and significance of it are the same, namely, that *that* is the moral ideal, the highest duty and virtue of a man for which his own nature fits him most, and not otherwise. This is the reason why the *Bhagavad-gītā* declares that the defective performance of one's own duties is better than the flawless performance of another man's duties; that even death is welcome if it comes in the wake of the discharge of one's own duties, while duties foreign to one's own nature are dreadful and strike terror into one's heart; that a man attains perfection through the performance of works assigned to his station in life, for such works are verily the worship of God who abides in our heart, guides us in our actions and pervades the whole universe.[1]

10. *The Inviolability of the Moral Code of Life*

Ordinarily no one is allowed to violate the varṇāśrama rules and pass abruptly from one stage of life to another, or from one social status to another, without going through the intermediate ones. The general rule is that an individual should pass through all the stages of life one after another and utilise the preceding stage as a stepping stone to the next higher. No one should, therefore, aspire to the life of a sannyāsin without having previously lived the life of a householder and discharged all its duties to the full satisfaction of the śāstras. We are warned against the danger of skipping over the first three stages and adopting the life of a sannyāsin all at once. A man who takes such a course runs the risk of slipping down from a great height to a great depth.[2] So

[1] *Cf. Gītā*, 3. 35, 18. 45-48.

[2] *Vide Manu-smṛti*, 6. 37.

also one who belongs to a particular class in the society should scrupulously attend to his own business and not meddle with the duties and functions of the other classes. If this rule is followed by all sections and classes of the society there will be perfect order and peace in it or, in Plato's words, justice will reign supreme in the State.

II. *Its Flexibility under Special Circumstances*

Although the above gives the general rule, yet exceptions can be made to it in very special circumstances. If by reason of his previous karma in previous lives an individual is found to possess special aptitudes, gifts and promise for a higher stage of life or higher social status, he is permitted to deviate from the natural course of development and liberation. Such a person may take to the life of sannyāsa direct from the first stage of brahmacaryya, and he is honoured and adored as a mahātmā or mahāpuruṣa, i.e. a great and perfect soul irrespectively of his age and actual social status. There are, of course, very rare instances of such individuals who come to the world almost as perfected souls from the beginning of their worldly career. Among them are counted those who are usually called bāla or naiṣthika brahmachārin, i.e. boy saints or life-long students, and also those called nitya-siddha or ever-perfect souls. The recognition of such rare blessed souls as occupying the highest position in society and the exception made to the general moral and social rules and laws in their case, are facts which clearly bring out the real spirit of varṇāśrama dharma and set in bold relief the fundamental principles underlyin[illegible]r

some reasons, which we need not discuss here, the spirit has been lost in the form, the principle has been sacrificed for its applications in the form of social customs and institutions. The result is that the ancient social order and system have been replaced by an artificial and soulless caste-system with its attendant evils of untouchability, etc., which is foreign to the true spirit of the ancient Indian culture.

12. *The Cardinal Virtues in Hindu Ethics*

It is neither possible nor desirable for Hinduism to reinstate its ancient social system under modern conditions of life in exactly the same form. If there is sufficient vitality in it, which it undoubtedly has, it will, as in the past it did, successfully adapt itself to the new conditions of Indian life in the new atmosphere of political freedom, achieved after many years of hard struggle and incalculable sufferings on the part of the sons and daughters of mother India. Be that as it may, we shall here content ourselves with an account of the cardinal duties and virtues which have been enjoined by Hinduism on all members of the body politic, and which must be emphasised in any scheme of its future reconstruction. These are: (1) truthfulness (satya or sunṛta), i.e. the habit of speaking what is true and good; (2) purity of body and mind (śauca); (3) self-continence (brahmacaryya), i.e. abstinence from all forms of self-indulgence—external or internal, subtle or gross, direct or indirect; (4) non-violence (ahiṁsā), i.e. abstinence from unnecessary and wanton acts of injury to life; (5) self-control (saṁyama), i.e. due

restraint of the senses and the mind ; (6) honesty in thought and deed (asteya), i.e. abstinence from stealing, deceit and fraud ; (7) detachment (aparigraha or anāsakti), which consists in abstaining from all attachment to sense-objects like sensual pleasures, worldly possessions, name and fame, etc. ; (8) simplicity (ārjava) in thought, speech and habits of life ; (9) fortitude and courage (dhṛti and abhaya) in dangers and difficulties of life ; (10) study of the holy scriptures (svādhyāya) like the Vedas, Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-gītā,* which last is the Hindu scripture *par excellence* and may well be called the universal scripture for mankind ; (11) religious worship (pūjā) which consists in sincere faith in and devotion to God ; (12) service to all human or living beings (jīva-sevā) as God's manifestations or embodiments in the world.[1]

So much for the natural course of man's moral development or spiritual growth which leads to the state of liberation or freedom from bondage. Over and above this, Hinduism lays down four special paths to liberation, any one of which one may follow according to his talent, temperament, character and attainments, and reach the desired goal. These are known as Rāja-yoga, Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga and Jñāna-yoga, and will be considered separately in the following chapters.

[1] *Vide Gītā,* 16. 1-3, 18. 14-25.

THE PATH OF CONCENTRATION (RĀJA-YOGĀ)

1. *The Self as a Transcendent Reality*

As bondage of the individual soul consists ultimately in the wrong knowledge of its identity with the mind-body organism, liberation is to come from a true knowledge of its essential, divine nature as a reality which is quite distinct from the body, the senses and the mind. With a clear realisation of the truth that the self of man is an immaterial and eternal reality which transcends the whole world of matter, that it is the unborn and undying spirit, beyond the limitations of space, time and causality, man becomes free from the influences of the world outside and of the changes and affections within his mind-body. He who thus realises the self stands liberated from bondage and becomes free from sin and suffering, sorrow and misery. He attains, forsooth, freedom, immortality and eternal life.

But the truth of the spirit is not apparent to many. While in Indian philosophy and Hindu religion it is recognised as a fundamental spiritual truth, there are many systems of philosophy and religion in the world for which it is either a mystery or an unfounded religious dogma. The main reason why many of the central aspects of Indian philosophy, especially of the Vedānta, like the method of intuition, the doctrines of bondage and liberation, of the absolute reality as pure existence-consciousness, appear to be strange and unacceptable to many Western thinkers is the failure to realise the truth of the spirit. The first step towards realisation of this

truth is the discriminative knowledge (vivekajñāna) of the self as distinct from the body and the mind. That the body, the senses, the brain or the nervous system cannot be the self of a man appears clearly from the fact that all these are material products which have no consciousness or intelligence inherent in them, while the self is an essentially conscious and intelligent principle. What we call the mind, the intellect or the ego cannot also take the place of the real self. The mind is generally regarded either as an internal sense or as a series of conscious states and processes. But the self of man is not any of his senses, be it external or internal, although he may use it as an instrument or means of action or cognition. So also the self as an identical and permanent subject of consciousness cannot be identified with the changing states and processes of consciousness. Again, what we call the intellect or the ego can hardly be the real self of a man, not only because both of them are subject to change and modification, but also because they are as much objects of the self's consciousness and belong to the world of not-self as physical things and qualities. We are, therefore, to admit that the real self of man is neither the mind-body organism nor the intellect and the ego in him. Rather, all these are to be recognised as the not-self in relation to the self, for they are apprehended and acknowledged as objects by the self. Now the self that knows and acknowledges the whole world of objects, including the mind, intellect and ego, is a constant and abiding consciousness which cognises all changes in the world of objects, but is not itself liable to any change and mutation. On the other hand, it is the unchanging and immutable subject or the stand-

ing witness of all change and mutation, of all action and affection. And, as such, it is pure consciousness transcending the empirical world of space, time and causality, of pleasure, pain and misery.[1]

2. *The Necessity of Self-realisation for Liberation*

Man is liable to sin and suffering in this life; and he sometimes enjoys pleasures, but more often suffers from pain in this world, because he fails to recognise the distinction between the self and the not-self. Freedom from sin and suffering is attained by him when he has the knowledge of the distinction between the self and the not-self. But this saving knowledge is not merely an intellectual understanding of the truth. It must be a direct knowledge or experience of the fact that the self is not the body and the senses, the mind and the intellect. An ordinary man of the world has no doubt that he is *somebody* with a certain name and social position. He has a direct and undoubted perception that he is an individual, psycho-physical organism. The knowledge that the self is distinct from all this must be an equally direct perception, if it is to contradict and cancel the previous perception. The illusory perception of snake in a rope is not to be sublated by any amount of instruction, but by another perception of the rope as such. To realise the self as a transcendent reality we require a long course of spiritual training or psychical culture which would lead us step by step to the attainment of a state of consciousness which is not conditioned by bodily or mental activities and functions. This will convince

[1] *Vide Sāṅkhya-kārikā* and *Kaumudī*, 17-20.

us of the truth that the self is a trans-physical and supra-mental reality. It will demonstrate to us the possibility of a genuine hyper-physical experience in which the self shines in its own light, completely detached from its association with the mind and the body.[1]

3. *Rāja-yoga as the Eightfold Path of Self-realisation*[2]

The path of concentration or Rāja-yoga is just the course of spiritual training or psychical culture for the attainment of spiritual truth and final liberation. It formulates a rational course of training which consists of certain practical methods of purification and self-control for the realisation of the true self of man. A man cannot realise the spiritual truth so long as his mind is tainted with impurities and his intellect vitiated by evil thoughts. It is in the pure heart and the clear understanding that the truth of the spirit is revealed and directly experienced. This truth can be realised only if we can manage to arrest and suppress the disturbing functions of the body and the senses, the mind and the intellect, and finally the ego (i.e. the empirical self), and yet have self-consciousness or experience of the transcendent spirit. With this end in view Rāja-yoga prescribes eight courses which begin with self-purification and self-control and end in perfect concentration of mind so as to leave the self in its original intrinsic character as self-shining, transcendent consciousness. In view of these courses, it is generally known as the eightfold means of

[1] *Vide Yoga-sūtra* and *Bhāṣya*, 1. 2-5, 2. 2-5.
[2] *Op. cit.*, 1. 1-2, 2. 28-55, 3. 1-4.

yoga (aṣṭāṅga-yoga). It consists of the disciplines of (1) *yama* or restraint, (2) *niyama* or culture, (3) *āsana* or posture, (4) *prāṇāyāma* or breath-control, (5) *pratyāhāra* or withdrawal of the senses, (6) *dhāraṇā* or attention (7) *dhyāna* or meditation, and (8) *samādhi* or concentration. These are known as aids to yoga (yogāṅga) which itself means the complete cessation of all mental functions (cittavṛtti-nirodha) and makes possible the realisation of the self as pure consciousness, unrelated to any objects including mental states and processes. When practised regularly with devotion and dispassion, they lead to the attainment of deeper and deeper stages of yoga or concentration till the final stage of complete restraint of the mind (cittavṛtti-nirodha) is reached.

(*i*) Yama or Restraint

The first discipline of yama or restraint consists in (a) ahiṁsā or abstention from unnecessary and wanton acts of injury to any life, (b) satya or truthfulness in thought and speech, (c) asteya or non-stealing, (d) brahmacarya or continence, and (e) aparigraha or non-acceptance of unnecessary gifts from other people. Although these forms of self-control are well known, still they are emphasised and elaborated in this system of Yoga in view of their importance for one who is bent upon self-realisation. It is a psychological law that a sound mind requires a sound body, and that neither can be sound in the case of a man who does not control his passions and sexual impulses. So also, a man cannot concentrate his mind on any object when it is distracted and dissipated by evil thoughts and propensities. Hence a yogin who wants to follow the path of concentra-

tion must completely abstain from all the evil courses and tendencies of our natural life.

(*ii*) Niyama or Culture

The second discipline of niyama or culture consists in the cultivation of the following good habits: (a) śauca or purification of the body by washing, taking pure food, etc. (which is external purification), and purification of the mind by cherishing good thoughts and emotions, like friendliness, cheerfulness for good things and indifference to bad things, etc. (called internal purification), (b) santoṣa or contentment, (c) tapas or penance which consists in the habits of endurance and in austerities, (d) svādhyāya or regular study of religious texts, especially the Hindu scriptures, and (e) Īśvara-praṇidhāna or meditation of God and resignation unto Him.

(*iii*) Āsana or Bodily Posture

The third discipline, āsana, is a physical training and consists in the adoption of steady and comfortable postures. There are various kinds of āsana which can be properly learnt only under the guidance of experts. The discipline of the body is as much necessary for concentration as that of the mind. If the body is not completely free from diseases and disorders, it is extremely difficult to concentrate the mind on anything. Hence in Rāja-yoga there are elaborate rules for maintaining the health of the body and making it a fit vehicle for concentration. The āsanas or bodily postures recommended in it are effective ways by which the body can be kept partially free from disorders and

limbs, especially the nervous system can be brought under control and prevented from producing disturbances in the mind.

(*iv*) Prāṇāyāma or Breath-control

The fourth course of discipline is prāṇāyāma or the regulation of breath. It consists in deep inspiration (pūraka), retention of breath (kumbhaka) and expiration (recaka) with measured durations in the proportions of 1 to 4 and 4 to 2 time-units respectively. The details of the process should be learnt from experts. That respiratory exercises are useful for strengthening the heart and the lungs and improving their functions is recognised by medical men when they recommend walking, climbing, etc. in a graduated scale for patients with weak heart and lungs. Rāja-yoga goes further and prescribes control of the breath for concentration of the mind, because it conduces to steadiness of the body and the mind. So long as the function of breathing continues, the mind also goes on fluctuating and noticing the current of air in and out. If, and when, it is suspended the mind is in a state of steady concentration. Hence by practising the control of breath one is in a position to suspend breathing for a long time and thereby prolong the state of concentration.

(*v*) Pratyāhāra or Sense-control

The fifth discipline of pratyāhāra consists in withdrawing the senses from their respective external objects and bringing them under the control of the mind. When the senses are effectively controlled by

the mind, they follow, not their special external objects, but the mind itself. So in this state, the mind is not disturbed by sights and sounds, coming through the eye and the ear, but makes the senses follow itself and its own objects. This state is very difficult, though not impossible, of attainment. It requires a resolute will and long practice to gain mastery over one's senses and make them follow the lead of one's purified mind.

The above five disciplines of restraint and culture (yama and niyama), bodily posture (āsana), breath-control (prāṇāyāma) and control over the senses (pratyāhāra) are regarded as the external aids to yoga or concentration (bahiraṅga-sādhana). As compared with them, the last three disciplines of dhāraṇā, dhyāna and samādhi are said to be internal to yoga (antaraṅga-sādhana), because they are directly connected with some kind of yoga or concentration of the mind.

(*vi*) Dhāraṇā or Attention

The sixth course of discipline is dhāraṇā or attention. It consists in withdrawing the mind (citta) from other things and fixing it steadily on some external or internal object. Here the mind holds fast to its selected, desired object and excludes all other objects from the focus of attention. The objects thus selected for dhāraṇā or attention may be one's navel, the mid-point of the eyebrows, the centre of the chest. the tip of the nose, etc., or the images of gods, etc. The ability to keep one's attention steadily fixed on some such object naturally leads to the next stage in the practice of yoga or concentration.

(vii) Dhyāna or Meditation

The next stage is the discipline of dhyāna or *meditation. It means the continual flow of thought* about, or rather, round about the object of attention. It is the steadfast contemplation of the object without any break or disturbance. This has the effect of giving us a clear and distinct representation of the object first by parts and aspects. But by long-continued meditation the mind can develop the partial representation of the object into a full and live presentation of it. It is in this way that dhyāna reveals the reality of the contemplated object to our mind.

(viii) Samādhi or Concentration of Mind

The last stage in the practice of yoga is samādhi or perfect concentration of the mind. In it the mind is so deeply absorbed in the object of contemplation that it losses itself in the object and has no awareness of itself. At the stage of dhyāna, the act and the object of thought remain distinct and separate states of consciousness. But in samādhi the act of meditation is not separately and distinctly cognised; it takes on the form of the object and loses itself, as it were. So here, only the object of thought remains shining in the mind, and we do not even know that there is a process of thought in the mind. This state of perfectly concentrated thought is known as saṁprajñāta samādhi or conscious concentration, in so far as there is in it a distinct consciousness of the object of contemplation. It is also called samāpatti inasmuch as the mind (citta) is, in this state, entirely put into the object and assumes the form of the object itself.

4. *Four Kinds of Saṁprajñāta Samādhi*[1]

There are four kinds of saṁprajñāta samādhi, according to the four kinds of objects of contemplation. The last three steps in the practice of yoga should concur and converge on one and the same object, i.e. the same object should be first attended to, then meditated and lastly concentrated upon. When thus combined they are said to constitute saṁyama which is very necessary for the attainment of samādhi-yoga or the final state of concentration in which there is the cessation of all mental modifications. But before that one may attain the state of saṁprajñāta samādhi by combining the last three steps with reference to the same thing. When this thing is any *gross* physical object of sense-perception, like one's navel or the image of a god, the samādhi is called savitarka. Having realised the nature of such objects, one should concentrate on *subtle* objects like the tanmātras or subtle, infra-atomic essences of the physical elements. The mind's concentration on these subtle objects is called savicāra samādhi. The next higher step is to take some *subtler* objects like the senses (which are certain supersensible powers underlying the sense organs) and concentrate the mind on them. The mind's perfect concentration on these subtler objects is called sānanda samādhi. The last kind of saṁprajñāta samādhi is called sāsmita inasmuch as here the object of concentration is the ego-principle (ahaṁkāra) with which the self is generally identified by men. The fruition of this stage of concentration is the realisation of the true nature of the ego as something different from the self.

[1] *Yoga-sūtra* and *Bhāṣya*, 1. 17.

But it also gives us a glimpse of the pure self as something almost indistinguishable from the ego, or the pure consciousness which is at the same time in-and-above the mind and the ego. This final stage of saṁprajñāta samādhi is also called dharmamegha samādhi, because it showers on one who attains it the blessing of self-realisation or pure self-consciousness.

5. *Saṁprajñāta and Asaṁprajñāta Samādhi*[1]

When one practises yoga with its eightfold means for a sufficiently long time and with a determined will, one attains asaṁprajñāta samādhi or the super-conscious state of concentration. This is samādhi or yoga *par excellence*, and is defined in the yoga system of philosophy as "perfect restraint of the mind" (cittavṛtti-nirodha). The previous state of saṁprajñāta samādhi or conscious concentration as a discipline is different from this asaṁprajñāta samādhi or super-conscious concentration. The former is but the *means* for the attainment of the latter which is its *end*. A long-continued practice of the one leads to the other. The two are different in their nature, although the one is the stepping-stone to the other. Saṁprajñāta samādhi is a state of perfect concentration of the mind on some object, while asaṁprajñāta samādhi is a state of perfect *restraint* of the mind as unrelated to any object. The former is the trance of meditation in which there is a clear and distinct *consciousness of the object* of contemplation. The latter is the trance of absorption in which, all mental modifications being stopped, *nothing is*

[1] *Op. cit.*, I. 18, 46-51.

known or thought of by the mind. In it all mental states, processes and functions are stopped, and there are no ripples in the placid surface of citta or the mind. Yet it is not a state of unconsciousness for the individual soul. For, even when the mind ceases to function and there is no thought or consciousness of any object (i.e. empirical consciousness) in it, there is still the possibility of a pure consciousness which refers neither to a subject of consciousness (the 'I') nor to an object of consciousness (physical or mental).

6. *Evidences for the Reality of Samādhi as a Supra-conscious State*

We have some evidence for the existence of pure consciousness in the state of deep, dreamless sleep, in which there is some sentience or consciousness, no doubt, but no conscious subject or cognised object. The state of dreamless sleep, when properly studied and understood, opens up a new dimension of existence altogether. A sleeping man is certainly not a dead and insentient being. We often say, "I enjoyed a sound sleep". This obviously means that there is the persistence of an enjoying consciousness in deep sleep, although there is then neither a subject nor an object of consciousness. Asaṁprajñāta samādhi is *like* this subject-objectless consciousness which one enjoys in dreamless sleep. That it is possible to attain this state is also shown by the phenomenon of dreamless sleep. If our mind-body organism ceases so to function as it does in our waking life, and there is a cessation of all thoughts as in dreamless sleep, we shall have a sort of trans-empirical consciousness *like* the one we get in dreamless sleep.

From another side also we can understand the possibility of a genuine superconscious experience. A mind that is deeply concentrated on an object is lost in that object. It does not and cannot think of itself. The subjective reference of consciousness (ahaṁkāra) is thus transcended in the state of deep concentration. Now just as the concentration becomes deeper and deeper, the objective reference of consciousness also becomes, for a time, clearer and clearer. But after some time and in accordance with the law of attention, the attentive consciousness begins, to grow fainter and fainter, till at last it ceases altogether, and with it the objective reference of consciousness drops out. And what is then left is pure subject-object-less consciousness, and this is the pure and real self of man.

Asaṁprajñāta samādhi is thus a state of supra-consciousness which is distinguishable alike from unconsciousness and dreamless sleep. It is *like* the state of deep sleep but not exactly identical with it. It is attained by means of concentrated attention and is a genuine *super-physical* experience which is not subject to the laws and conditions of the body and the mind. But deep sleep is after all a *psycho-physical* state governed by the laws and conditions of the body and the mind, and is induced by the relaxation of bodily and mental activities including attention, and not by their regulation, concentration and restraint. The one is the outcome of the utmost concentration of attention, while the other represents its greatest dispersion. In asaṁprajñāta samādhi there is, of course, the cessation of all mental functions including even that of concentration; but this is achieved by means of concentration, and not relaxa-

tion, of attention itself. It puts a stop to all mental modifications and does not rest on any object at all. When it is attained the whole world of objects ceases to affect and exist for the self. In this state the self abides in its own essence as pure consciousness, enjoying the still vision of isolated, self-shining existence. When one attains this state one reaches the final goal of life, namely, liberation or freedom from pain and suffering.

7. *Caution against the love of Yaugika Powers*[1]

A word of caution, however, seems to be necessary for those who wish to follow the path of concentration or Rāja-yoga. A yogin or follower of this path is believed to acquire certain extra-ordinary powers by the practice of yoga at its different stages. Thus we are told that the yogins can tame all creatures including even ferocious animals, get any object by the mere wish of it, know directly the past, present and future, produce miraculous sights, sounds and smells, and see subtle entities, gods and angels. They can also see through closed doors, pass through stone walls, disappear suddenly from sight, appear at different places at the same time, and so forth. While these things may be possible, the yoga system and also the perfected yogins warn all religious aspirants not to practise yoga with these ends in view. They are so many temptations and impediments in man's spiritual life. Yoga is meant for the attainment of liberation. The yogin must not get entangled in the quagmire of supernormal powers of producing

[1] *Vide Yoga-sūtra* and *Bhāṣya*, 3. 37 f., 3. 51, 4. 1.

miracles. He must overcome the lure of yaugika powers and resist the temptation of demonstrating miracles, and move onward till he reaches the goal of his journey, viz. liberation.

CHAPTER X

THE PATH OF ACTION (KARMA-YOGA)

1. *The Charge of Other-worldliness and Pacifism against Hinduism*

The second path laid down in Hinduism for the attainment of liberation from bondage is karma, which is an alternative to the other paths. Hinduism is generally accused of being other-worldly and pacifist. It is held by many Indian and Western scholars that Hindu thought and religion find no value in life in this world which is full of misery, and so recommend a course of withdrawal from life and its activities for the attainment of the highest good of life, viz. liberation. But that this is a misrepresentation of Hinduism becomes quite clear when one glances over the *Bhagavad-gītā* which is the most authoritative and popular scripture of the Hindus.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* opens with a graphic account of Arjuna's utter disinclination to fight his kinsmen even for the sake of a kingdom and of his desire to retire from life altogether and live on alms as a better course. It is here pointed out by Śrī Kṛṣṇa that a life of complete inactivity is not only undesirable but also impossible. To give up all activity is not necessarily to attain the perfect life. Contrariwise, the perfect life is not the mere negation of activity. Rather it is a positive state of the fulfilment of life in which the self of man maintains its calmness in the midst of disinterested activities. If perfection were merely a state of inactivity, a stone would be more perfect than a man. Further, the law of nature makes it impossible for us to abandon

However much one may try to repress the springs of action in him, his nature and constitution will force him to do certain things and engage in certain activities. These will make him act in spite of himself. Life without any activity is physically impossible. We can give up some of our social and cultural activities, but not our natural or psycho-physical activities. The cessation of these activities means death. Even the wisest among men must engage in certain moral and social activities, if only for the sake of maintaining the social and moral order of the world. The social structure of life is sure to collapse if the wise ones among men weaken and deaden the springs of action in the general mass by living a life of indolence and inactivity. Even the perfected selves must, therefore, devote themselves to the work of conserving the social order and moral values of the world (loka-saṁgrahārtha) and live a life of disinterested activities. In the light of all this we are to say that Hinduism inculcates upon us the value and necessity of actions or works for the attainment of perfection in life.[1]

2. *The Meaning of Karma-yoga*

Since the performance of karma or work is necessary for all men, the question arises: What are these karmas and how should they be performed in order that they may lead the religious aspirant to the highest goal of life, namely, liberation? The answer to this question explains Karma-yoga—the second path to liberation.

[1] *Cf. Gītā*, 3. 19-25. *Cf. Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-kathāmṛta*, Vol. I, pp. 46, 122, 169; Vol. II, p. 191, *passim*.

Karma-yoga literally means the performance of actions in the spirit of yoga. The spirit of yoga lies in equanimity (samatva) of the mind attained through renunciation of all desires for the fruits of actions, like success or failure, merit or demerit. A yogin performs all actions with insight and wisdom (prajñā) and is not, therefore, affected and moved by their success or failure. He maintains equilibrium of the mind in spite of all the good or bad consequences that may arise out of his actions. This becomes possible for him because his mind is free from attachment to the objects of sense and remains centred in the pure self, even when he performs all actions in this life. Hence Karma-yoga negatively means freedom from all mental dissipation due to desires for the fruits of actions, and positively it means the state of being firmly centred in the pure self when one is engaged in performing various actions.[1]

3. *Two Kinds of Karma: Sakāma and Niṣkāma*

There are two ways in which all actions may be done by us. First, we may be impelled to act by an inordinate desire to attain the pleasures of life like health, wealth, power, name and fame, or to shun unpleasant states and objects like diseases, poverty, etc. Actions in which the motive is desire for or aversion towards objects are called sakāma or selfish actions. When the mind is impelled by such strong passions and impulses it loses its balance and is tossed about by various objects of sense. Further, an incessant search for pleasurable objects without the control of reason tends to stupefy the mind and

[1] *Cf. Gītā*, 2. 48-53, 55-57.

paralyse its normal functions. When frustrated it leads to anger, fear and infatuation. These in their turn impair a man's memory and intellect, and spell ruin for him. He loses all powers of concentration of the mind, and with it, all peace and happiness in life.[1] Hence the way of sakāma karma or selfish action is not the proper moral path.

As distinguished from this, Hinduism recommends another path, namely, that of unselfish action, as morally flawless and perfect. Here we are advised to perform all good actions and do all the duties of life in a disinterested spirit without any hope of reward or fear of consequences. Morality is not the search for pleasures or enjoyments in life. It consists in the due performance of one's duties for their own sake without any ulterior motives for gain or any selfish ends. A morally perfect man performs all actions in a spirit of detachment and indifference to considerations of gain and loss, name and fame. He should perform these actions only with a view to discharging his duties in life, and not for the satisfaction of the cravings and propensities of his animal nature. Such actions are called niṣkāma karma or unselfish work. And this work is worship of God and leads to liberation. The *Bhagavad-gītā* tells us that he who has controlled himself can enjoy objects through the senses which have been freed from the influence of love and hate. As such he has perfect peace of mind and a contented heart. He becomes free from all sorrow and misery, and his mind, being purified, rests in God. It is the performance of works in a dispassionate spirit, i.e. niṣkāma karma that

[1] *Cf. Gītā*, 2. 41-44, 61-63, 66.

enables one to rise above the sway of the passions and the egoistic impulses of life and establish oneself firmly in God or Brahman.[1] This is karma-yoga or the path of action that leads to liberation.

4. *Different Kinds of Action in Karma-yoga*

Now we are to consider the different kinds of actions which may be performed by a man who follows the path of karma, i.e. karma-yoga for the attainment of liberation. Generally speaking, we may say that all the actions which pertain to one's svadharma, i.e. the duties pertaining to one's station in life should be performed by a man without any desire for the fruits thereof. More specifically speaking, however, we may mention different kinds of actions, the performance of any one of which will constitute karma-yoga.[2] Thus it would be karma-yoga for a householder if he performs his household works as his God-appointed duties in life, and does not hanker after their fruits but leaves them to God as being God's gifts to him. Another person who may be engaged in doing various kinds of social works like charity, medical relief, education, etc., performs karma-yoga, only if he is not guided in his actions by selfish motives of any gain to himself. Similarly, the performance of religious works, both ordinary and special (nitya and naimittika), like prayer, worship, rites and sacrifices, also constitutes karma-yoga for those who are engaged in them and offer their fruits to God without any hope of reward. So also, it is karma-yoga for a man to perform the

[1] *Gītā*, 2. 64-72.
[2] *Cf. Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-kathāmṛta*, Vol. I, pp. 138, 169, *passim*.

acts of breath-control, attention, meditation, concentration, etc. in a dispassionate and disinterested spirit. Thus while the forms of activity may be different in different cases, the spirit is everywhere the same. It is the spirit calmness and equanimity generated by freedom from attachment to the fruits of actions that constitutes the essence of karma-yoga. And one who follows this path with care and devotion for a sufficiently long time is liberated from bondage. How this comes about may be explained next.

5. *How Karma-yoga leads to Liberation*

Karma-yoga leads to liberation through self-purification and self-realisation. Self-purification, however, means here purification of body and mind. In Hindu philosophy the self is intrinsically pure and divine. So, what is called self-purification in Western philosophy is really purification of the mind-body organism or the gross and the subtle body of the self for the time being. The performance of all the different kinds of actions mentioned above in a disinterested spirit has the effect of purifying the mind of the individual who performs them. Actions which are done under the influence of impulsive desires and aversions, of love and hate have generally certain distractive effects on the mind. They stain the mind and vitiate the thought of the individual who is swayed by them. On the other hand, actions which are done without attachment, hatred and infatuation naturally keep the mind calm and serene, and conduce to enlightenment of the intellect.[1] In this way, they intensify the svāttika or

[1] *Cf. Gītā,* 5. 11-12.

the luminous element of the mind and enable the intellect to realise clearly the self's distinction from the body and the mind ; and this is liberation.

In another way, the performance of disinterested actions (niṣkāma karma) leads to self-realisation. To perform certain duties for duties' sake without any ulterior motive of gain to oneself is to weaken one's feeling of pride and egoism (ahaṅkāra) with reference to them. One feels as if the actions are due, not to one's own ego or agency, but to the merits of the actions themselves. A man does not ordinarily take any credit for doing his bare duties. This means that the sense of egoism is at a low ebb when one performs disinterested actions as duties for duties' sake. A long-continued and devoted practice in the art of karma-yoga will thus have the effect of removing and exterminating a man's egoism (ahaṅkāra). And with this his self stands revealed in its pristine glory as pure consciousness untrammelled by the body and the mind.

6. *Difficulties in the Path of Action* (*Karma-yoga*)

While karma-yoga is a possible way of attaining liberation, it is by no means an easy path. Rather, it is a very difficult path and requires arduous efforts. For it is extremely difficult for a man to rise above his animal nature and to be free from the influence of the ordinary passions and impulses of life, of his natural desire for pleasure and aversion towards painful objects. Still more difficult is it for a man to get rid of his egoism, the sense of 'I' and 'my' which ordinarily accompanies all his actions. In view of these difficulties some people think that it is impracticable to perform any action without a

desire for its fruits, for such an action is motiveless and, therefore, psychologically impossible. But this is an extreme view of the matter and it is really due to a misunderstanding. What is necessary for karma-yoga is not that there must not be any motive, but that there should be no selfish motives, for an action. And that this is quite possible appears from the performance of altruistic actions which are meant for the good of other people than the doer himself. It is also shown by the possibility of such a thing as a man's doing his duty for duty's sake and not for pleasure or gain to himself. These cases go to show that in some cases the idea of some good end or the feeling of duty may be a sufficient motive for an action. It is not psychologically necessary for all actions to spring for a desire for pleasure or for some gain to the agent himself. To say that there can be no action without some desire and that every desire is a desire for pleasure is to make many actions inexplicable. Hence the possibility of actions without attachment (āsakti) or desire for their fruits must be admitted. But although that is possible, there is no doubt about the fact that it is difficult and requires strenuous efforts in different directions.[1]

7. *Three Ways of overcoming the Difficulties*

There are, generally speaking, three ways of overcoming the difficulties in the path of karma, i.e. karma-yoga. The first is the way of Rāja-yoga, especially its three disciplines of yama or restraint,

[1] For the difficulties in the path of Karma-yoga and the ways of overcoming them, vide *Bhagavad-gītā*, chapter iii, especially, ślokas, 36-43. *Cf.* *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-kathāmṛta*, Vol. I, pp. 47, 126, *passim*.

niyama or culture and pratyāhāra or withdrawal of the senses from their natural objects. It is through long and laborious endeavours to control the senses and make them follow the lead of reason that one succeeds in weaning them from the pleasurable objects of world. So also the practice of yoga with its eightfold means enables one to see through the wiles of egoism (ahaṅkāra) in man and realise the self as pure consciousness distinct from the body and the mind, the intellect and the ego. Secondly, devotion to God (bhakti) enables a man to calm and pacify the senses and passions in him, and turn them Godward, so as to sublimate and ennoble them. The devotee may even dedicate his all, including the ego, to God and thus remove the obstacles created by it in the path of liberation. Lastly, knowledge of the self (jñāna) as the pure, free and immortal spirit in man is of great help in effectively controlling his senses and passions, and also destroying his egoism (ahaṅkāra). It shows how the ego is a product of prakṛti or primal matter, the doer of actions (kartā) and the enjoyer of their fruits (bhoktā). It is, therefore, something foreign to the self of man and requires to be transcended. Bhakti and jñāna are not only of much help for karma-yoga, but stand each as a distinct method of attaining liberation. We shall consider them as such in the next and the last chapter.

CHAPTER XI

THE PATH OF DEVOTION (BHAKTI-YOGA)

1. *Bhakti-yoga as a relatively easy Path to Liberation*

The third path recommended in Hinduism for the attainment of liberation is bhakti or devotion to God. Bhakti as yoga or a spiritual path is naturally easier than any other path, for it rests on man's natural emotion of love as that is turned towards God. The emotion of love is a universal and potent factor in the life of all living beings, both human and sub-human. Men as well as beasts love those objects which they regard as near and dear to them or as somehow pleasurable or satisfying to them. They are also found prepared to make all sorts of sacrifices for their beloved ones, who in their turn reciprocate the same attitude of love and sacrifice in relation to them. This reciprocal love becomes the basis of a happy communion between those who love one another. It contributes to the enrichment and fullness of their lives in a way which is most congenial to the nature of man. Hence it is that the path of bhakti or devotion to God is easier for many spiritual aspirants than any of the other paths to liberation. Now bhakti-yoga as a spiritual path is constituted by man's pure love of God, his service to and sacrifice for God, God's reciprocal love of man, and the blessed communion between man and God.

2. *The Necessity of Moral Preparation for Bhakti-yoga*

Bhakti or devotion to God requires a good deal of preparation on the part of the seeker after salva-

tion. A man cannot be devoted to God unless he has a firm faith or belief in God in some form. Love of God naturally arises in the heart of a man when he somehow knows or believes that God is kind and merciful to all beings and that He has a loving concern for their good and well-being. Such faith or knowledge may be acquired by a man through reasoning and reflection on the nature of his self within and the world outside. Or, it may be imparted to him by the sacred scriptures and religious teachers and preceptors. But in neither case, can real faith in God arise in man's mind unless it becomes free from all impurities. Nor can faith in God be a steady and firm conviction in the life of a man who is not pure in body and mind. Hence it is that for real faith in God there must be purification of one's body and mind through the performance of morally right actions and abstinence from those that are morally wrong. For this purpose one should go through the disciplines of yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma and pratyāhāra as explained in Rāja-yoga, with sufficient care and regularity. He should also perform the ordinary duties of his life with honesty and without lust, greed and infatuation. When a man's body and mind become sufficiently pure in this way, faith in God is generated and steadied in his life through study of the scriptures and the instructions of teachers or preceptors. Hence the necessity of a moral preparation for bhakti-yoga is recognised in Hinduism. It is also recognised in some
religions like Christianity which teaches that '
are the pure in heart, for they shall see
Bhakti-yoga thus presupposes some kind

or knowledge and some karma or moral practices on the part of a man who wants to follow that path with any hope of success.

3. *The Different Forms of Bhakti or Devotion to God*

While bhakti-yoga requires some preliminary knowledge of God and moral purification, it consists in the individual soul's constant efforts to be united with God and enjoy the bliss of communion with Him. There are different ways in which the individual may conceive God and try to be united with Him, and there are also different forms of the experience of communion between the devoted individual and his beloved God.

(*i*) Pratīka and Pratimā Worship

In Hinduism God is regarded as the all-pervading, omnipotent and omniscient spirit who has evolved the world of nature and individual souls from within Himself, orders and arranges all things and governs all beings in accordance with the moral law of karma. God is thus manifested in the world as a whole and in every thing and being of the world. Hence a devotee (bhakta) may find God revealed in the glorious objects of nature, like the sun and the moon, and worship Him in the form of such objects. He may also consider the objects of nature or the different departments of nature as presided over and governed by different gods and goddesses like Indra, Agni, Varuṇa, etc. These he may recognise as the manifestations of the Supreme God in so many forms. These gods and goddesses also may become the

objects of man's devotion and worship at certain stages of his religious life. So also, man may represent the powers and attributes of the Supreme God as the Godhead taken in some aspect and with some function of Himself, *e.g.* Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Durgā, Kālī, etc. These different deities, again, may be concretely represented in the forms of suitable and significant images made of different materials. The worship of God or the gods and goddesses in the forms of natural objects, regarded as symbols, is known as pratīka-worship, while that in the form of images or pictures and paintings is called pratimā-worship. It is a mistake to think that the worship of images, approved by Hinduism, is crude idolatry. For, image-worship is really the worship of God as represented by means of images. The images by themselves are neither looked upon as God nor worshipped as such. They are treated only as symbols or concrete representations of God. Both pratīka and pratimā worship are thus symbolic worship or devotion to God by means of symbols. All worship is perhaps symbolic in this sense.[1]

(*ii*) Incarnation Worship

Just as God may be worshipped through symbols, so He may be honoured and adored through devotion to some divine personalities who are regarded as God's incarnations on earth. Sometimes an individual may worship an incarnation of God like Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Śrī Rāmacandra as God himself and thereby reach the goal of his life, viz. salvation.

[1] *Cf.* The author's article on 'Image-worship in Hinduism', *Vedānta Keśarī*, May, 1945.

(iii) Saguṇa Brahma Worship

An enlightened devotee may, however, conceive God as formless spirit possessing all the highest moral qualities in unlimited fullness. Here we reach the noblest conception of God as the highest person or puruṣottama who is above the world of nature and of individual souls, and is all-pervading and has no other form than the infinite universe itself. The worship of God as all-pervading, formless spirit is known as Saguṇa Brahma-upāsanā, and it is commonly regarded as the highest form of bhakti or devotion to God.

Now, by bhakti-yoga is meant sincere and constant devotion to God, represented through any of the forms, explained above, or conceived as the universal, formless spirit. The essence of bhakti thus lies in constant devotion to God. To be constantly devoted to God means, for a man, to have a steady and unbroken remembrance of Him. A man who is sincerely devoted to God, always thinks of God and meditates on Him with a loving heart and purified mind. According to Rāmānuja, the great devotee-philosopher of India, bhakti means constant remembrance (dhruvānusmṛti) of God, since the words 'bhakti' and 'upāsana' are synonyms, and upāsana means steadfast attention to the object of worship without gap or break in the same way in which a flowing liquid forms an unbroken line.[1]

4. *The Manifold Means of Bhakti*

In Hinduism, many ways and means have been recommended for the purposes of inducing, maintain-

[1] Rāmānuja, *Śrībhāṣya*, I. I. I.

ing and developing the attitude of bhakti in a religious man. A man should purify his body and mind, perform daily worship of his beloved deity and mutter the basic word-symbols representing the deity (vīja-mantra) as a part of his worship. He should serve his God in the same way in which he serves himself, or would like to be served by others who love him. He should constantly recite the sacred name or names of his God and sing devotional songs in praise and adoration of Him. He should read the sacred scriptures, and study religious and philosophical works which dwell on the nature, attributes and powers of God. He should pray to and prostrate himself before God, and pay homage to Him in grateful recognition of all that he receives from Him. He should also meditate on God either in the form of his beloved deity or as formless, universal spirit. This he must do every day with loving care and austerity as often and as long as possible. Above all, he should surrender his all, including himself, to God, who is the giver of all to us. A careful and continued course of training along these lines is necessary for the attainment of intense and ardent bhakti or love of God.[1]

5. *The Different Mental Attitudes in Bhakti*

There are different attitudes of the mind, one or other of which a man must take up in order to cultivate bhakti or devotion to God. Generally speaking, there are six such mental attitudes. First,

[1] The different forms, or better, means of Bhakti are enumerated as nine in an oft-quoted Sanskrit verse which reads as follows: " arccanaṁ vandanaṁ dāsyaṁ sevanaṁ smaraṇaṁ tathā, kīrttanaṁ śravaṇaṁ sakhyaṁ tathaivātmanivedanam ".

one may have, like the enlightened seers and saints, an intellectual and tranquil love of God as the creator and ruler of the universe, its origin and end, and the ultimate ground of its creation, preservation and destruction. This is known as śānta-bhāva. Secondly, one's attitude towards God may be like that of a faithful servant to his master. This attitude is called dāsya and is especially marked by a sense of subordination and spirit of service in the individual in his relation to God. Thirdly, a man may have just that friendly attitude towards God, which we find between two devoted friends. This is known as sakhya-bhāva and is characterised by a sense of equality in man in his relation to God. Then, he may love and serve God in the same way in which a father or a mother loves the child and tries to make him or her happy. This is known as the parent-attitude or vātsalya-bhāva. Contrariwise, one may have the attitude of a son or daughter in one's relation to God. This may be called pitṛ or mātṛ-bhāva or the filial attitude. Here God is loved and adored as the Holy Father or the Divine Mother. Finally, a person may have that single-minded devotion to God which is characteristic of a devoted wife's love for her husband. This attitude is known as madhura-bhāva, because it is the happiest and most congenial, for certain temperaments. It is also very useful in conducing to man's sense of unity and intimacy with God who is here looked upon as the most beloved object in the world.

6. *The Need of God's Grace for Liberation*

When a man adopts any of the above attitudes and follows the ways and means for cultivating love of

God, he makes some progress in the practice of bhakti-yoga. He who thus rises high on the path of bhakti becomes very dear to God and receives His choicest gifts, namely, the grace of God, the knowledge of reality and liberation from bondage. Without God's grace neither the knowledge of reality nor the highest end of liberation is attainable by man. The reality of the self, world and God cannot be known by mere reasoning, study or meditation, by mere austerity, charity or sacrifice. He who is so favoured by God is in a position to know God. God reveals Himself to those who are sincerely devoted to Him and are thus deserving recipients of His grace. God is the Supreme Lord who, by His grace, purges away the sins and evils in the life of His devotee and makes the attainment of bhakti-yoga easier for him. One who is sincerely devoted to God and is resigned unto Him cannot but meditate on Him at all times and see Him in all the walks of life. Such a devoted lover of God becomes the most beloved of God Himself. God removes all the serious impediments and obstacles in the path of His beloved devotee, and places him under favourable conditions and gives him that purity of the mind and enlightenment of the intellect through which alone God must be known.[1] But while the grace of God is necessary for man's moral elevation and spiritual perfection, man, on his part, must prove himself worthy of God's grace by sincere devotion, constant meditation and complete resignation to God.

[1] *Cf. Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* 2. 23; *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad,* 3. 2. 3; *Gītā,* 7. 17, 19, 10. 10, 11. 53-54, *passim. Cf.* also Rāmānuja, *Śrībhāṣya,* 1. 1. 1.

7. *Two Grades of Bhakti: Gauṇī and Parā*

Bhakti is a progressive path of self-realisation and God-realisation by man. In it a man progresses from a lower to a higher state of devotion to God. The lower stage is known as gauṇī or preparatory bhakti. Here man's love of God is mixed up with love of his self and he worships God with the intent of gaining certain desirable ends for himself, like wealth, name, fame, etc. Then, his devotion to God is not a constant remembrance of Him as the most beloved object in the whole world. Rather, it is an intermittent course of thought and meditation on God at the specified periods of worship and prayer to Him. As distinguished from this lower grade of bhakti, there is a higher grade which is known as parā or supreme bhakti. This is a state of maturity of love and devotion to God, which is attained by a long-continued practice of bhakti-yoga at the preparatory stage. When this higher stage is reached, the devotee desires nothing for himself, and likes to think of nothing but God and surrenders his whole self to God. All that he has, is dedicated to God ; all that he does, is meant to serve God ; and all objects that he perceives are his beloved God.

When a man attains the state of parā or supreme bhakti, he realises the truth about the self and God. Every forward step in the path of bhakti means an advance in the moral life of man. The more one can love God and respect His wishes, the more is one freed from the influence of the natural passions and impulses of life, and the more is one's mind withdrawn from the pleasures of sense. A man is thus enabled to control his mind and senses, and concen-

trate them on God. He then relinquishes all desires for the fruits of his actions and dedicates them to God. With this, the egoism in him tends to disappear and he ceases to think of himself as an independent agent and a maker of his destiny. Rather, he recognises his self as being but a part of the divine self and, therefore, as entirely dependent on and subordinate to God. He finds his self as living, moving and having its being in God. This knowledge of the self leads man to surrender his will completely to God. This is the final stage of bhakti called prapatti which, although sometimes distinguished from it, may be treated as the climax thereof.[1] To a man who thus loves God as his dearest, and is completely resigned unto Him, God gives His grace and reveals Himself in His glory and goodness as the protector of the universe and the supreme Lord of all. Nay more, God in His supreme love for the devotee, preserves his surrendered self and returns it to him, so that there may be a happy communion between the two. If man at the height of his devotion forgets himself and renounces his self to God, God in His grace gives Himself to man and preserves his individuality. Such is the mystery of God's self-giving love ; and the key to it is perhaps to be found in God's nature as ānanda or bliss. It is the very nature of ānanda or joy to multiply itself. Whenever we have joy or happiness, we want others to participate in it, to share it with us. God who is supreme joy and infinite bliss does not, therefore, efface the surrendered self

[1] This distinction is made in Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita-vāda and some Vaiṣṇava schools, and it is maintained that only the three higher castes can follow the pa [illegible] hakti, while that of Prapatti is open to all, irrespective of [illegible]

of His devotee, but renovates and restores it to him. The result is that the devotee continues to live in the presence of God and enjoy blissful communion with Him. And this is final liberation or freedom from sin, suffering and all other bondage.[1] The path of bhakti or devotion leads to liberation in which the self of the devotee is not lost in God, but is preserved for the enjoyment of the highest bliss. Free from ignorance and bondage of every kind, the liberated soul enjoys, in perfect love and wisdom, infinite joy born of complete communion with God.[2]

[1] In the different schools of Vaiṣṇavism, the state of mukti or liberation is somewhat differently conceived. Broadly speaking, they describe four kinds of mukti, namely sārūpya, sākolya, sāyujya and sārṣṭi. In the first, the liberated soul is said to become *similar in nature* to God in so far as he has the same sort of pure consciousness which is the essential attribute of God. In the second, the liberated soul is said to live in the *same world* with God and enjoy there perfect freedom and bliss. In the third, the liberated individual is considered to be in the most *intimate union* with God. In the last, the liberated soul is believed to participate in God's glory and powers, or to have *powers similar* to those of God.

[2] *Cf.* Rāmānuja, *Śrībhāṣya*, 4th Pāda of 4th Adhyāya.

CHAPTER XII

THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE (JÑĀNA-YOGA)[1]

1. *Jñāna-yoga or Philosophical Knowledge, the most difficult Path to Liberation*

Jñāna-yoga is the way of philosophical knowledge that leads to liberation. It is the most difficult of the recognised paths to liberation. In a sense, the other paths require to be transcended and left behind by a man who wants to follow the path of knowledge. But from this we should not, as some people do, think that jñāna-yoga is opposed and antagonistic to the other paths. Rather, we should say that it is the strenuous path which is not meant for all, but for the select few who are enlightened in their intellect and rationalistic in their temperament. But for such enlightenment of the intellect and development of the reason, a man has to tread for some time the other paths of rāja-yoga, karma-yoga and bhakti-yoga to some length at least. Hence it is sometimes said that jñāna-yoga is the highest of all yogas and that all karmas or actions end and culminate in jñāna or knowledge.[2]

2. *Preliminary Moral and Religious Training for Jñāna-yoga*

The knowledge aimed at in jñāna-yoga for the attainment of liberation is the philosophic knowledge

[1] The best account of Jñāna-yoga is found in the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara and his followers. *Vide* Śaṅkara's *Śārīraka-bhāṣya* on *Brahma-sūtra* and commentaries on the principal Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The account of jñāna-yoga given here is mainly based on these works.

[2] *Vide Gītā*, 4. 33.

about God, self and the world. But it is not a mere intellectual understanding of the truth about these things. On the other hand, it is that clear realisation of the truth about them which is of the nature of a direct experience or vision (darśana) of absolute truth. Now the realisation of philosophical truths requires a long course of moral training in which one is to control one's senses, passions and impulses. So long as the mind of a man is swayed by love and hate, and his intellect is darkened and confused by evil thoughts and propensities, he cannot expect to realise the truths about self and God. We must have a pure heart and a tranquil mind if we are to know and realise the truths of philosophy and religion. Even the desire to know God or the pure self does not arise in a man whose mind is impure and runs after the base pleasures of sense, or is absorbed in the thoughts of sensual gratifications. Hence for the purification of the body and the mind, and the enlightenment of the intellect, the seeker after truth must adopt some of the methods recommended in the other paths of yoga. He must practise yama and abstain from injury to life, falsehood, stealing, self-indulgence and agreed for wealth. He should also observe the vows of purification, contentment, fortitude, study and meditation on God. Then, he must perform all the duties of his life without a desire for their fruits. And, finally, he should worship and constantly pray to God with full faith in and complete resignation to Him. The necessity of moral training for jñāna-yoga is recognised in the *Bhagavad-gītā* when it says: "The knowledge of Brahman or God is to be sought for by a man through obeisance, interrogation and loving service to a

teacher who has himself realised Brahman."[1] When through such preliminary moral training, a man becomes sufficiently pure in heart and tranquil in thought, there springs in his mind a sincere and ardent desire to know God, his inmost self.

3. *The Four Pre-requisites of Philosophical Study*

With the generation of this genuine love of knowledge and the desire to know God (vividiṣā), the necessity of the performance of religious rites and ceremonies, of prayer and worship ends, and the study of the philosophy of self and God (brahmajijñāsā) begins. But even here the mental preparation for jñāna-yoga is not complete. One should strive further for the acquisition of certain spiritual equipments like discrimination (viveka), self-control, etc. (śamadamādi), renunciation (virāga), and a keen desire for liberation (mumukṣutva). A man is ordinarily engrossed in the things of sense and the pleasures of the world. It is only when he realises that the pleasures of life are transitory and fleeting, and that they involve pain in their attainment and evanishment that he ceases to be satisfied with them and hankers after the eternal good and ever-lasting joy. A man, who has a clear understanding of the distinction between the transitory goods of the worldly life and the permanent values of the spiritual life (viveka) strives for the knowledge of God as the means to the attainment of eternal bliss. Then, he must have his mind and senses entirely under his control (śama and dama). He should remain self-

[1] *Cf. Gītā,* 4. 34.

contented (uparati) and maintain the spirit of tolerance amidst trying situations in life (titikṣā). He should also have concentration of mind (samādhi) and a firm faith in the scripture and the teacher (śraddhā). Further, he must qualify himself for jñāna-yoga by renouncing all desires for the enjoyment of the fruits of his actions here or hereafter (virāga). Finally, he must have a strong will to be free and liberated from sin and suffering, *i.e.* bondage.

4. *The Method of Philosophical Study*

A student who has these requisite qualifications is a fit recipient (adhikārī) of the esoteric truths about God, self and the world. Before we come to these philosophical truths, it is necessary to explain the method of philosophical study. In jñāna-yoga a threefold method of philosophical study is recommended for the spiritual aspirant. First, he should approach a competent teacher who is to impart to him the necessary instructions regarding self and God, with their logical grounds and reasons. In the absence of such a teacher, he may study the scriptural teachings on these subjects. This first stage of reverential reception of spiritual truths is called śravaṇa. Secondly, the student should reflect on and critically consider the truths thus learnt and become convinced within himself as to their rationality and logical necessity. This process of rational reflection on spiritual truths is known as manana. So far the student has only an intellectual understanding of the truths and no clear realisation or experience of them. But without such experience, his knowledge remains open to doubt and disbelief. It may be upset and

discredited by contrary and conflicting grounds and reasons. Hence as the final step in philosophical study, the student is advised to engage himself in constant thought and meditation on the spiritual truths. This is the process of nididhyāsana or contemplation which is considered to be absolutely necessary for a real knowledge of philosophical truths about God and the self. This threefold method of study has the effect of freeing our mind from the wrong beliefs and conceptions which are now ingrained in our mind and are the cause of our bondage. It puts an end to our ignorance about self and God and leads us to liberation through a clear realisation of our real self as identical with God, and of the world as an unreal or false appearance.

5. *The Philosophical Knowledge of God, Self and the World*

As we have already stated, jñāna-yoga is the spiritual path that leads to liberation through philosophical knowledge. This knowledge primarily concerns the ultimate reality called Ātman or Brahman, the individual self or jīva and the world of nature or jagat. In jñāna-yoga, Brahman or God is the sole reality and it is the pure existence-consciousness-bliss (sat-cit-ānanda), in which there is no difference and distinction, no quality and determination. The world of many things and beings, of subjects and objects, and of the many experiences due to their relation is only imagined in Brahman and is, therefore, false and unreal. It is false in so far as it at first appears as real, but is then contradicted by a true knowledge of reality, in the same way in which the snake perceived in a rope is

contradicted and cancelled by the true perception of the rope. The reality of the individual self lies in its pure conscious being or existence, as distinct from the body, the senses, the mind and the ego. In so far as this is the case, the real self of an individual is identical with Brahman or God and is, therefore, free, immortal, infinite and blissful in its original and intrinsic character. But on account of the inscrutable power of māyā in Brahman there is the appearance of the world of difference and plurality including organic bodies with senses, minds and egos of different kinds. Under the influence of the same divine māyā, the individual self forgets its essential unity with God and, in its ignorance, associates itself with a particular body and practically identifies itself with that body. This constitutes bondage for the individual self. In this state it forgets that it is really Brahman, and behaves like a finite, limited, miserable being, subject to sin and suffering, births and deaths. Liberation from bondage is to be attained by a true knowledge of the self as really identical with Brahman, as verily Brahman Himself. This saving knowledge, which destroys all ignorance and illusion affecting the individual self and reveals its real, divine nature, comes from a study of these philosophical truths by the threefold method of śravaṇa, manana and nididhyāsana. How that comes about may now be more fully explained.

6. *How Philosophical Knowledge leads to Liberation*

A spiritual aspirant first learns the above truths from a teacher who has himself realised Brahman, or from the scriptures which bear on jñāna-yoga. Then he

enters on a critical study of them with a view to finding out how far they are rational and acceptable. If he finds that there are strong logical and philosophical grounds and reasons to support them, then he becomes convinced about them and have a firm belief in them without any doubt or misgiving in his mind. Now a rational study of our experiences of the world outside and of the self within would show that the reality underlying them both is pure existence which is identical with pure consciousness and is free, infinite and immortal and, therefore, pure bliss itself.

All the things we see round about us and the world as a whole are subject to change and mutation, decay and destruction. As such, neither the world nor any particular thing of the world can be treated as real. For what is truly real cannot be destroyed, and what is utterly unreal can never come to exist or be perceived. To put the same thing in different words, the real is never contradicted, and what is contradicted, or is liable to contradiction cannot be truly real. The finite objects of the world and the world as a whole being liable to contradiction cannot be called real. The particular objects of experience exclude and contradict one another. So also, the world of our waking experience is contradicted and negated in dreamless sleep. But while all things as limited and particular *forms* of existence are thus contradicted, existence *as such* or pure, formless existence which is common to them and of which they are particular forms, is never contradicted and can never be contradicted. When one thing is contradicted or negated, e.g. the illusory snake, what is contradicted is the particular form of existence and not exist[illegible]

as such. Even an illusory snake *is* and has some being, although that being is not of the form of a snake. When we think of nothing at a certain time and place, we think at least of the being of that time and place. In like manner when in dreamless sleep we think of nothing and do not perceive any world, there is at least the existence of our self or soul that does not perceive the world. It follows that the ultimate reality underlying the world is pure, formless existence which is never contradicted.

A critical study of our experiences of the self within us would also show that the real self of man is not the body, the senses, the mind, the intellect or the ego. The self is a permanent reality which is of the essence of consciousness.[1] But the body and the senses are subject to incessant changes and modifications. So also, the mind is a series of changing conscious states and processes. The intellect and the ego with which a man is apt to identify his self are no less subject to change, growth and decay than are his body, senses and the mind. Further, all of them are objects for our conscious self and so distinct and different from it. Hence the real self of man cannot be identified with any one of them or with all of them taken together. But what persists in all forms of consciousness and is common to all consciousness of the body, the senses, etc. is the being of consciousness *as such*. In all particular forms of consciousness, there is consciousness *as such*, or a pure, formless consciousness. By the real self of man we are to understand the being of pure consciousness, or pure existence which is consciousness itself but has

[1] *Cf. Bhagavad-gītā*, especially chapter ii on this point.

no particular form, because it is *this* consciousness that is really permanent and abiding, and is never contradicted. Even in dreamless sleep, consciousness *as such* persists; otherwise we cannot have, on waking, a memory of it and say that we enjoyed good sleep. It follows that the reality underlying the conscious life of man, or the real self in him is pure existence-consciousness. It is the same reality that underlies the physical world. For the pure existence which we have found to be the reality of the world has the intrinsic character of consciousness. Consciousness is a self-manifesting or self-conscious reality. This reality is called Ātman or Brahman. Hence it is established by a critical study of experience that Brahman is the only ultimate reality and that the real self of man is identical with Brahman who is pure existence-consciousness. Brahman as pure existence-consciousness is also pure bliss. The particular forms of existence and consciousness are governed by the laws of space, time and causality. But pure, formless existence-consciousness is not so governed; it is above the world of space, time and causal determination. As such, it is infinite, eternal, immortal and absolutely free. And as absolute freedom it is infinite joy and eternal bliss itself. The self of man being identical with Brahman is also free and immortal, and is infinite and eternal bliss.

But if Brahman be the only reality and the real self of man be identical with Him, how are to explain the origin of the world of many objects including the body, the senses, the mind and the ego? How again are to explain the bondage of the self to the body and the world of sin and suffering? To explain

these things we have to admit some inscrutable power called māyā in Brahman, which is neither real nor unreal, but indescribable. The world, as we find it, does indeed exist as a system of facts which are actually perceived by us. As such, we cannot dismiss it as utterly unreal like a hare's horn or a barren woman's child,—objects which cannot even appear to exist and be perceived by us. Hence the world cannot be called unreal. Nor can we call it real because, as we have seen, it is subject to change and liable to contradiction. So we are to say that the world is an indescribable appearance in Reality or Brahman; and this is the inscrutable power of māyā in Brahman. Under the spell of the same divine māyā as beginningless nescience or ignorance, the individual self forgets its divine nature and wrongly identifies itself with the finite body and mind. As such, it considers itself to be a finite person who is subject to birth and death, and is pleased or displeased with worldly objects, according as the body and the mind are affected and influenced by them in certain ways. This explains the bondage of the individual soul. *Hence we see that some primal ignorance* is the root cause of the individual soul's bondage to the world. It follows that the individual soul would be liberated if and when its ignorance is destroyed by true knowledge of God and the self, and it distinguishes itself from the whole world of objects including the body and the mind, and realises its unity or identity with God.

It is by such critical study of experiences that an intellectual conviction is generated in the mind of the spiritual aspirant regarding the truth that his self is the free, immortal spirit and that it is identical

with Brahman Himself. But an intellectual understanding of the truth is not sufficient for attaining the desired goal of liberation. The deep-rooted effects of the long-standing ignorance that led one to identify himself with the mind-body complex must be cancelled and finally rooted out. For this purpose the spiritual aspirant must constantly meditate on the truth and firmly establish it in his life. It is through such continued meditation on the truth and constant effort to lead life accordingly, that one is enabled to shake off the illusory notion of one's identity with the body, the mind or the ego. It is also in this way that the illusory notion of the world at last disappears, and Brahman as pure, universal consciousness shines within us and all around us. It is here that the ardent seeker after absolute truth realises Brahman within himself and as his very self. Thus disappears the illusory distinction between the self and Brahman, and, with it, all bondage and limitation of the self. The self, then, stands liberated and abides in its innate glory as immortal spirit, eternal life and infinite bliss, because Brahman is all this and liberation is identity with Brahman.

7. *The Unity and Inter-relation of the Four Paths to Liberation*

Here we come to the end of our account of the four special paths to liberation. One who closely follows this account will not fail to notice that instead of being opposed and antagonistic, they are rather helpful and complementary to one another. All of them lead to the same goal, namely, liberation or absolute freedom from sin and suffering. There are also certain important points of agreement among

them. They are built alike on the faith that the self of man is essentially divine and that it is different and distinct from the mind-body complex with which it may be wrongly identified for the time being. Each of them seeks, in its own way, to set aside the illusory identification of the self with the not-self (i.e. the body, the senses, the mind and the ego), and helps man realise his real self. While the paths are different, the self realised through them is the same. In Rāja-yoga, the final state of samādhi reveals the self as pure consciousness which is self-centred and self-shining. In Karma-yoga also the self is realised as the pure subject which is above all affections and afflictions of the mind-body and the selfish desires and interests of the ego in man. Bhakti-yoga also ends in the surrender of man's egoism and the recognition of his self as pure consciousness which is in communion with the divine consciousness. So also in Jñāna-yoga the self is realised as pure consciousness which is the same as the divine consciousness and bliss.

The four different paths to liberation are also found to be inter-related. Thus such parts of rāja-yoga as self-restraint and self-culture are recommended in every other yoga, while rāja-yoga includes in the course of spiritual training such methods as devotion to and meditation on God as well as study of the sacred scriptures. The practice of dhyāna or meditation which is especially taught in rāja-yoga is included in both bhakti-yoga and jñāna-yoga, although that be in relation to God and the philosophical truths respectively. In like manner, karma-yoga is rendered easier and more effective by true knowledge of the self and dedication of the fruits of

actions to God. So also bhakti-yoga requires some knowledge of the self and God as well as disinterested performance of religious duties. Finally, jñāna-yoga presupposes a good deal of training in the other yogas to make one eligible for it. The frame of mind that is necessary for jñāna-yoga is induced in a man when through the disinterested performance of religious works he is purged of all the effects of his previous karma and comes to have a pure heart and an enlightened intellect. Such a course of moral training in disinterested work and worship raises the spiritual status of a man and makes him fit for receiving esoteric instructions in spiritual matters.

In conclusion, we are to observe that karma-yoga as disinterested action with concentration of mind on the pure self and bhakti-yoga as the surrender of man's egoistic individuality to God are very much allied to jñāna-yoga. While in the former two, there is an implicit recognition of man's real self as the free spirit transcending all material and mental phenomena, in the latter there is an explicit affiirmation and realisation of the truth of the spirit as free, immortal and blissful existence. But even when man's isolated individuality is completely transcended by one who follows the path of jñāna in this way, it behoves one to dedicate one's life to the service of man and God.[1] A life of calm and passionless activities for the relief of suffering humanity and the moral uplift of mankind is not inconsistent with the realisation of absolute truth or Brahman. Rather he who realises Brahman and enjoys the bliss that

[1] *Cf. Gītā,* 3. 22-26; 5. 2 ff.; 15. 19; 18. 2 ff. *Vide* also *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-kathāmṛta,* Vol. I, pp. 35-36.

Brahman is, will all the more strive for the liberation of all beings and their participation in the infinite bliss that is his, for he sees the same self in all. The life of such a perfect *jñāna-yogin* or enlightened seer is a worthy and inspiring ideal for the whole of humanity.

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